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MEDITATIONS

FOR THE USE OF THE CLERGY,

For Every Day in the Year.

ON THE GOSPELS FOR THE SUNDAYS.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF MGR. SCOTTI, ARCHBISHOP OF THESSALONICA.

REVISED AND EDITED BY THE OBLATES OF ST. CHARLES.

WITH A PREFACE

BY HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER.

VOL. I.

FROM THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT
TO THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

37

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TO

THE CLERGY

OF

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER,

This Volume

IS

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

REVEREND AND DEAR BRETHREN,—

Benedict XIV., in the Bull "Quemadmodum," December 16, 1746, granted a plenary indulgence once a month, on the usual conditions, applicable also to the departed, to all who shall daily make a quarter of an hour's meditation; and, further, to all who shall, in public or in private, either teach or learn the method of meditation, seven years and seven quarantains.

The vivid realisation of the world unseen, and the detachment of the soul from this world, depend upon meditation habitually directed to the eternal truths and to the objects of faith. Unless we realise the presence and the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, how shall we be able to say, "With Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh; I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and delivered Himself for me"?*

Meditation is indeed necessary for all men, but most of all for us. A Priest who does not meditate day by day soon loses the sacerdotal spirit; his Priesthood weighs heavily upon him; his duties lose their sweetness; its privations sadden and vex him; its daily round of sacred obligations becomes monotonous, and therefore all but intolerable. To sit for hours in the confessional sorely tries his patience; he has hardly a word for his penitents; to preach is still more difficult: he repeats his old sermons over and over again, without a sense of what he is saying. His soul is like a well that is dry. Even by the side of the sick and dying he

* *Galatians* ii. 19, 20.

has little to say, for his own faith is dim and his charity is cold. Such a Priest becomes conscious that souls do not draw to him. No attraction goes out from his presence, and in him the penitent and the fervent find little help or response. Our people soon detect this inward drought as by an instinct.

But the Priest who "meditates on these things and is wholly in these things" is easily known. St. Bernard says that fervour generates facility, and facility sweetness, and sweetness a brightness of mind which shows itself in thought, word, and deed. In preaching and in directing souls, in consoling the afflicted, and in preparing the dying for their change, there is about such a Priest a sensible influence which is felt by all; a fulness of heart, a facility of simple words, and a living warmth of charity show that he is speaking not his own thoughts, but the things which he has learned of God.

In saying these things, reverend and dear brethren, I say nothing that you do not already well know. Therefore, in dedicating to you this first part of "Scotti's Meditations for the Clergy," I need only add that it is a book held in high esteem in Rome. Having found by the experience of many years its singular excellence, its practical piety, its abundance of Scripture, of the Fathers, and of ecclesiastical writers, I have thought that it would be an acceptable and valuable addition to your books of devotion. The present volume is for the first quarter of the Ecclesiastical year; the other three parts will, I hope, be ready in the course of next year.

May the unction from the Holy One be upon you, and from you may it descend upon the souls entrusted to your charge. Day by day, in the Holy Mass, my poor prayers are offered for you all.

Commending myself, and my whole flock, to your charity and to your intercession, I remain, reverend and dear brethren,

Your affectionate servant in Jesus Christ,

\+ HENRY EDWARD, Archbishop of Westminster.

Advent, 1872.

THE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I HAVE been induced to publish this little work, chiefly for two reasons. The first is, that having been accustomed for about twelve years to give Meditations to the Clergy once or twice every week, I have necessarily collected from the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, many maxims belonging to the duties of the Ecclesiastical State. And in order that these maxims may prove of use to those who may hereafter have to discharge a similar office, I have determined to print them, so as to facilitate the cultivation of the true Ecclesiastical spirit in the Priesthood. Truly have they need of special culture, since they are in graver peril by reason of their greater dignity; for, as St. Gregory Nazianzen says, "the greater the elevation, and the greater the dignity, the greater is also the danger." Being masters of the flock, if they are not enriched with salutary learning, if they are not guided by sound spiritual maxims, they will, of necessity, meet with greater trials than simple disciples; as St. Chrysostom warns them, "it is necessary for Teachers to discharge their duty and sustain perils, far more than simple disciples." If they are firmly established, they will without doubt procure immense profit to the faithful; for, says St. Leo, "the soundness of the ruler is the health of the subject;" while, on the contrary, if they are perverse, they will become the cause of ruin to the people, as St. Gregory shows. So that in writing for Priests, I hope also to confer a benefit on the Laity.

My second reason is, to furnish Priests with matter and incentives for the daily exercise of Meditation. If they are not themselves *first enlightened* and sanctified, they certainly cannot

sanctify and enlighten their flocks. St. Gregory Nazianzen says: "It is necessary first to be cleansed, then to cleanse others; first to be instructed in wisdom, then to instruct others; first to have light, then to enlighten others; first to draw near to God, then to lead others; first to be sanctified, and then to sanctify others." The better they cultivate their own spirits, the better will they cultivate others, as St. Lawrence Justinian says. Now the most profitable means of self-cultivation is daily Meditation, and therefore St. Charles Bovvomeo thus exhorted his Priests: "In the first place, assiduously exercise yourselves in holy prayer; in the next place, apply yourselves every day for a certain space of time to the study of Meditation and silent prayer with the whole affection of a pure mind." Therefore, in urging them to practise holy Meditation, as I do in this work, it seems to me that I render them a useful service.

Meditation, as is well known, consists of two things: one is God, speaking to the soul; the other is—the soul, speaking to God: "When thou readest, God speaks to thee," says St. Augustine, "when thou prayest, thou speakest to God." Therefore in each Meditation, I have done no other than speak to them in God's name, leaving it to their fervour, after having read some reflection which has impressed them, to make acts of the love of God, to bewail their sins, to ask for the graces of which they feel most in need, so that the precious effects of this exercise, which St. Lawrence Justinian has most wisely summed up, may be theirs: "From pure prayer fire is kindled, temptation put to flight, sadness departs, reason is renewed, weak virtue repaired, fervour excited, tepidity put to flight, the rust of vice is consumed, sparks of heavenly desire shine forth, and the flame of divine love springs up."

I have thought it useful to take the Meditations from no other source than from the Holy Gospels, so that it may not be myself, but the Great High Priest of the future blessedness, speaking to His Ministers: "Let us so hear the Gospel as if our Lord were present," says St. Augustine, "the Lord is ascended, but this is the truth of the Lord." And, as St. Ambrose says, in the Holy Gospel, Priests find not only the doctrines of Faith, *but instruction of* manners, and a mirror of behaviour. Every

action, every word of Christ well meditated, foments piety and is a rule for all virtues, says St. Basil. Moreover, if every week Priests would make their Meditation on the Gospel for the Sunday, they would find themselves provided with many reflections for their sermons in church on that day, and they would preach with zeal and unction; for, says St. Gregory, "if they desire to speak in a true way, they must draw forth what to say from the pages of sacred authority."

The Meditations, then, are founded on the Gospels for the Sundays, except those which belong to the Fridays in Lent, which are taken from the corresponding office of the Passion; and except also a few made on the principal Solemnities of the year. On Saturdays all the Meditations relate to our glorious Mother and Mistress, Mary. I have thought that pious Priests (and it is only pious Priests who attend daily to mental prayer) would read with pleasure, and frequently meditate on the greatness and glory of this Mother of our Great High Priest, both that they may be apt to preach on this subject in public, increase their own devotion, and obtain the special patronage of this most powerful Advocate with God. In the Canticle of Canticles we find the Spouse called "the Fountain of gardens, the Well of living waters which run with a strong stream from Libanus" (iv. 15), and these titles refer to the Blessed Virgin, whom St. Epiphanius thus addresses: "Hail, full of grace, who satisfiest the thirsty with never-failing fountains of sweetness." Again, "Mary is the Well of Living Water, that is, of grace and instruction," procuring grace "for this present life, and glory for the *life to come*." Moreover, these same words of Solomon are explained by St. Gregory Nyssene, Venerable Bede, and St. Anselm, in reference to holy Priests, in whom they see, says Richard of St. Victor, "a never failing fountain, springing up and breaking forth with the love of God, and visiting and watering the sick with the plentitude of its abundance." And in order that this may be our case, we must draw from Mary's fulness the waters of grace and instruction, first to fill ourselves with them, and then to pour out our superabundance upon others.

These *Meditations* are almost all founded on the Festivals of

the Blessed Virgin which the Church celebrates, and even two or three Meditations are made upon the subject of the chief of these Feasts, so as to furnish ample matter for private devotion and public preaching. But as it might not be easy to combine the Saturdays of the Ecclesiastical year with the respective Festivals of our Lady, I have made a separate Index of them, in order that the reader may make use of them with greater facility, transferring them to their proper place. If I have gathered together in each Meditation texts from the Holy Scriptures, and from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, I have not done it out of vain ostentation, but that I might not speak to the Clergy as a Master, but rather show them the authority of God speaking to them, and those whom the Church recognises as Masters. It will assuredly give pleasure to pious Priests to find many sayings collected, which St. Augustine calls "honied with the honey of heaven, and lightsome with divine light." Possibly some of those passages may arrest the Priest's attention, and give him matter for useful reflection. The maxims of the Holy Fathers also, which I have quoted rather than my own words, will be usefully retained in the memory, they will be willingly pondered, and will easily move the affections; for it was of their works that St. Bernard wrote to Ecclesiastics: "Place somewhat daily in thy memory, which thou mayest digest, and afterwards recall and ruminate upon; something which may supply matter for thy purposes, and aid thee in thine intentions, and which may so occupy thy soul that it be not distracted with other thoughts." And there is no doubt, as Cornelius à Lapide says, that the more numerous are the quotations from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, so much the more will he who meditates be furnished with wise precepts, and incentives to grow in virtue.

It must be observed, however, that, when I have spoken of the duties of the Clergy, I have not intended to bind every Priest to the fulfilment of every duty, for it would be impossible for one man to do it all and do it well. Therefore, when I have said that the Priest ought to catechise, preach, confess, administer the *Viaticum, assist the dying*, &c., I have intended to speak of the

Priesthood generally, whose offices are various, and distributed among various persons, and which are of obligation according to circumstances of persons, time, and place. St. Thomas says: "A man should dispense usefully the talent entrusted to him, opportunity of place, time, and all other things being preserved."

For the rest, each one is bound to execute the charge which he has received, and to make use of the grace which is given him, when there shall be opportunity, as St. Thomas further says. I should wish to engrave one single maxim of St. Augustine on the minds of all God's Ministers, a maxim which more strictly concerns them than other Christians: "His own temporal life, for his neighbour's eternal life, a Christian man will not hesitate to lose." From this we may conclude, how reasonable, and how worthy of being well weighed, and applied to the different circumstances of this matter, is that other doctrine of the Angelic Doctor, when he says: "Every temporal convenience should be neglected, and all gain despised, in order to promote spiritual good."

Lastly, it has seemed to me well to conclude each Meditation with two ejaculatory prayers. For the consent of all Masters of the spiritual life convinces me of their utility, as well as what St. Augustine says of their use by the Fathers of Egypt. Finally, I trust that Priests, who make use of these my feeble efforts, will remember me in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and will accept my labours as an offering which I make them in reverence for their exalted dignity, for "it is fitting," says St. Thomas, "that an offering of the fruits of our labours should be made to Priests."

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FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

HOW TERRIBLE WILL BE THE JUDGMENT OF WICKED PRIESTS.

I. BECAUSE THEY HAVE CAST DISHONOUR UPON THE SANCTITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

II. BECAUSE THEY HAVE OBSCURED THE SPLENDOUR OF THE CHURCH.

III. BECAUSE THEY HAVE ILL OBSERVED THEIR STATE OF LIFE.

"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars."—*St. Luke* xxi. 25.

1. *There shall be signs in the sun.* What shall these signs be? They are more clearly set forth by St. Matthew, as St. Ambrose observes; for St. Matthew says: "The sun shall be darkened" (xxiv. 29). Now remember, that, besides the literal sense, these words may be understood to refer to what happens in the Church. As St. Augustine says, Jesus Christ is called "the Sun of Justice" (Malachias iv. 2), and His throne, which He has in the Church, is compared, in the Book of Psalms, to the sun: "His throne shall endure as the sun before me" (Ps. lxxxviii. 38). He diffuses everywhere light, heat, and fertility. Sometimes, however, this sun appears to be obscured to the world on account of the spots and stains of His ministers, upon whom nevertheless is laid the charge of manifesting its splendour to the nations. If they live holily, they glorify the Name of God, but if, on the contrary, they lead wicked lives, they expose it to innumerable blasphemies. So St. Chrysostom. Many men when they behold the wicked lives of ecclesiastics, either fall

into doubt, or altogether disbelieve what the faith teaches concerning the sanctity of Christ and His religion, as says St. Bernardine of Sienna. Therefore Jesus Christ desires that His own sanctity should shine forth in His priests; as Moses said to Aaron, "I will be sanctified in them that approach to Me" (Lev. x. 3); and again He admonishes them that they be holy to their God, and profane not His name: "for they offer the burnt-offering of the Lord, and the bread of their God, and therefore they shall be holy" (Lev. xxi. 6). He reproves wicked Priests for having dishonoured Him by profaning His name (Malachias i. 12); whence St. Bernard calls them "persecutors of Christ." In what condition, then, will they find themselves before the tribunal of that Judge whom they have so greatly outraged? Where shall they hide themselves at the rising of that sun which will make manifest their perverse counsels and their works of darkness? when the Lord "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts"? (1 Cor. iv. 5).

2. *There shall be signs . . . in the moon:* that is, as St. Matthew says (xxiv. 29), "the moon shall not give her light." This is one of the phenomena which will precede the universal judgment; but, with St. Ambrose, we may take it also to signify the diminution of splendour in the Church, by reason of sins. We learn from St. Gregory that in Holy Scripture the moon often signifies the Church. When the Sun was raised to the right hand of the Father, this moon was established in her habitation (Habak. iii. 11): she rules over the night of time, the Sun over the day of eternity. "God made two great lights; a greater light to rule the day, and a lesser light to rule the night" (Gen. i. 16). "Fair as the moon," says the Canticle of Canticles (vi. 9). The Church is represented, directed, and administered by Priests, as says St. Ambrose, and although she is always visible, and always manifestly holy, nevertheless her splendour is sometimes overclouded by the wicked lives of her ministers. "No man," says St. Gregory, "hurts the Church more than he who turns away from God, while he possesses a name for sanctity, and belongs to *a holy order.*" "*No man,*" says St. Peter Damian, "does greater

mischief to the Church." How miserable the Priests who have so defiled the spouse of their Judge. We have an image of His wrath in the wrath of King Assuerus against Aman, when he said, "He will force the queen also in my presence, in my own house" (Esther vii. 8).

3. *There shall be signs . . . . in the stars. The stars shall fall from heaven* (St. Matthew xxiv. 29). St. Ambrose says that the moral sense of this passage is this: that men whose glory should shine like that of the stars, shall fall. God has placed Priests in the firmament of the Church to give light to the faithful during the night of this world; constituted in a holy order, they ought to be "like stars remaining in their order" (Judges v. 20). The ministers of God should look upon themselves as "the stars of heaven" (Deut. i. 10), and merit the praise given by the wise man to a holy priest: "He shone . . . as the morning star in the midst of a cloud . . . in the temple of God" (Eccles. l. 6). But when you sin, O Priests, you fall from your high estate: "I saw a star fall from heaven" (Apocalypse ix. 1), and if your sin becomes notorious, you open an abyss into which will be precipitated the souls whom you scandalise. "And he opened the bottomless pit" (*id.* 2). The angels are called in the Book of Job (xxxviii. 7) "the morning stars," and when Lucifer fell he drew down many with him in his ruin. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer" (Is. xiv. 12). It is precisely because they did not keep their high estate, their princedoms, that Almighty God has reserved them to be a spectacle of His vengeance in the judgment of the great day. So St. Jude. Let us then take heed lest we fall; let us beseech Almighty God to make us shine in the firmament of His Church, and let us prepare ourselves for the judgment of God by holiness of life. "Before judgment prepare thee justice" (Eccles. xviii. 19).

"O Lord, I will be mindful of Thy justice alone."—*Ps.* lxx. 16.

"Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight no man living shall be justified."—*Ps.* cxlii. 2.

MONDAY.

HOW MISERABLE WILL BE THE ESTATE OF WICKED PRIESTS IN THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

I. By reason of their confusion.
II. By reason of their fear.
III. By reason of their expectation.

"And upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea, and of the waves, men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world."—*St. Luke* xxi. 25, 26.

1. *By reason of their confusion.* Let us take occasion, from the signs which will announce the approach of the general judgment, and which are here foretold by our Saviour, to meditate on the anguish of wicked Priests in that day of wrath and vengeance. Let us meditate on their confusion, for it will be far greater than that of other sinners. For, after having been judges on earth, they will then appear as criminals. This will be to their great misery, because, as the character which the Sacrament of Order imprints on the soul is indelible, they will preserve, throughout all eternity, the traces of their original dignity. Their most secret sins will be disclosed when the light of God, infinite in itself, and incomprehensible in its operations, "shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. iv. 5); then shall God execute that terrible menace, "I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will shew thy nakedness to the nations" (Nahum iii. 5). This shame will increase, when, as unworthy shepherds, they come to be separated from their now happy flocks, and to be cast among the goats, and destined for slaughter; when "He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but *the goats on His* left." How great an ignominy for the shepherds

to be numbered with the goats at the left hand; how great an ignominy for the Fishers of men to be cast out with the bad fish; how great an ignominy for the Labourers in the Mystical Vineyard to be cast into the fire with the unfruitful branches! What will they do when they behold the glory of their fellow-labourers, some of whom will occupy honourable places in the fold, whilst others will be seated at the side of the Chief Pastor as assessors of the Judge, appointed to judge even the angels! "You also shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," says our Lord in St. Matthew (xix. 28), and St. Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 vi. 3), "Know you not that we shall judge angels?" What will they do when they see themselves despised not only by men, but by God! "They have been confounded because God hath despised them" (Ps. lii. 6).

2. *By reason of their fear.* In that great and terrible day the just will scarcely believe themselves secure. "The just man shall scarcely be saved" (1 Pet. iv. 18). In what condition, then, will Priests find themselves on whom, in their ordination, has been conferred the charge of "bearing rule"? Severe will be their judgment, "for a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule," as we read in the Book of Wisdom (vi. 6). Their judgment will indeed be most severe, because, as says St. Bernard, they were raised to the rank of angels; Jesus Christ will judge them inexorably, for, says St. Isidore, not even the honour which He conferred on them made them amend. He will demand an account of the particular graces which He had bestowed upon them in vain. So St. Dorotheus. And how justly will His anger burn when He hears the cries of the reprobate, whose Priests have dragged them down along with themselves to damnation! What will be His fury when He sees on His left hand the innumerable victims of the scandals, the negligence, and the sloth of Ecclesiastics! He will fling himself upon them as a bear that is robbed of her young. "I will meet them as a bear that is robbed of her whelps," says the prophet Osee (xiii. 8), and He will demand of them an account of the sins of all. So St. John Chrysostom.

3. *And by reason of their expectation.* What sentence can these *miserable men expect?* "Depart from me, you cursed, into

everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels" (St. Matt. xxv. 41). "Depart from me." How great will be their despair at being separated from Him whose ministers and vice-gerents they were, and whose Sacred Body they had offered in sacrifice, fed on and dispensed to others, day by day! "You cursed." This curse will fall as a thunderbolt on those who have blessed the people in the name of God, and who have received the promise that Heaven would bless all things which they should bless. "Into everlasting fire." What! shall he go into eternal fire, who was called to save men from that fire, and who perhaps has saved many from it by the functions of his ministry? Alas! "He saved others, himself he cannot save" (St. Matt. xxvii. 42). "Which was prepared for the devil." The Priest, then, after having occupied the post of a captain in the Christian army against Lucifer, shall be cast into the furnace of fire prepared for that rebel chief. "And his angels." Then he, who on account of his priestly office was called by God Himself an angel of light, and was destined to fulfil the office of an angel ("he is the angel of the Lord of hosts," says the prophet Malachias) (ii. 7), even he shall go with the angels whom St. Augustine calls "deserters and the corrupters of men." What a spectacle to behold the tremendous degradation of the Priest, and his sacerdotal ornaments bestowed on seculars who had the purity and zeal of priests. Almighty God has made known how terrible this last sentence will be, and in what terms it will be couched, in the prophecy of Ezechiel (xxxix. 8), and the Council of Paris teaches that the judgment of Priests is most awful and tremendous, wherein the blood of others will be required at their hands. Therefore, whilst we have time, let us be confounded for our sins, let us fear the judgments of God, let us hope for His mercy, and so shall we escape the confusion, the fear, and the miserable expectation of the last great day.

"Rebuke me not, O Lord, in Thy indignation, nor chastise me in Thy wrath."—*Ps.* xxxvii. 1.

"Be not Thou a terror to me, Thou art my hope in the day of affliction."—*Jeremias* xvii. 17.

TUESDAY.

HOW GLORIOUS AND FULL OF CONSOLATION TO GOOD PRIESTS WILL BE THE ADVENT OF CHRIST THEIR JUDGE.

I. THEY WILL APPEAR AS THE MINISTERS OF THE JUDGE.
II. AS FATHERS OF THE JUDGE.
III. AS GLORIFIED MEMBERS OF THE JUDGE.

"And then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty."—*St. Luke* xxi. 27.

1. *They shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud. Now,* our Lord Jesus Christ is neither known nor respected by the world; but, as Origen says, His Divine Father has decreed that in that day the Son of man, who humbled Himself even to the death of the Cross, shall be manifested as King of glory. As St. Thomas says, the good shall behold Him on His throne of clouds, to their joy; the wicked, to their torment. Who can think of the day of His appearance without trembling, who can look on it with fearless eyes? "Who shall be able to think of the day of His coming, and who shall stand to see Him?" (Malachias iii. 2). Holy Priests will behold Him with joy, even as faithful ministers look on their king. He Himself will glorify them in the face of all men, for He has promised that such should be honoured by His Father. "If any man minister to Me, him will My Father honour" (St. John xii. 26). In that day He will know how to recompense them for all the tears, the humiliations, the persecutions which they have endured in His service. "Serving God" (as one among them has said, and all His true followers make those words their own) "with all humility, and with tears, and temptations" (Acts xx. 19). *If* all the elect will then be glorified,

a double glory will be given to those who have served close to the person of the Judge; as the same St. Paul says to Timothy (1 Ep. v. 17), "Let the priests that rule well, be esteemed worthy of double honour." This is that "good degree" which is attained by sacrifices made in the service of God. "They that have ministered well, shall purchase to themselves a good degree" (1 Tim. iii. 13). If we fight as our Captain commands us, whose ministers we are, and who will be the Judge of the whole army, no lot can be more blessed than ours, says St. Augustine.

2. *With great power.* The great power with which Jesus Christ will then appear invested, will redound to the glory of our Priesthood, by which we were constituted Fathers of this glorious Judge. St. Bernard calls Priests the Fathers of Christ. By the words of consecration, they bestow on Him His sacramental existence, which by St. Augustine and the Fathers is compared to His incarnation in the fulness of time. Moreover they beget Him in the souls of the Faithful, causing Him, by means of sanctifying grace, to come and dwell in their hearts: "He is my brother, and sister, and mother" (St. Matt. xii. 50). St. Gregory says that the Preacher does, in fact, become the mother of Christ, because by his voice the love of God is begotten in the hearts of his hearers. Hence St. Bernard, considering this parentage, says that a zealous Priest becomes the father, the mother, the brother, and the sister of Jesus Christ. How great then will be his joy, and how great his glory, when this his Son shall manifest Himself, clothed with so great power, and justice, and wisdom! "A wise son maketh his father glad" (Prov. x. 1). In that day the reprobate will envy the elect, whom in this life they had accused of madness and folly, for they will see them adorned as the children of the kingdom—the children of God. "Behold how they are numbered among the children of God" (Wisdom v. 5). But what will they say on beholding the exaltation of Priests, who will appear as Fathers of Christ? O God! how happy is the Priest who can say: "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day" (2 Tim. i. 12). O my God! make me

y of so great a joy.

3. *And majesty.* The majesty of our Head, Jesus Christ, will render all the Body r esplendent, and from the fulness of His glory, all His members will be penetrated with glory. But who can picture to himself the glory of His Priests? *Now* they are honoured as Heads of the Faithful; *then* they will be the most glorious members of the Judge, who is the Head of all Priests, as says St. Prosper. Jesus Christ has made use of them to work wonders, and diffuse gifts in His Church. By their eyes He has watched over His flock; by their lips He has preached, exhorted, admonished, threatened, and administered the sacraments; by their hands He has baptized, anointed, administered the Holy Eucharist, blessed, consecrated; by their feet He has conveyed the Gospel and all His many mercies to the Faithful. . . . It is right, then, and fitting that He should honour them as His more illustrious members, for He has promised that those who have honoured Him shall be honoured: "Whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify" (1 Kings ii. 30). Let us then take heed to honour Him, and to cause Him to be honoured; let us take heed to serve Him with our body and with our soul, and cause Him to be served by others even until the great day of His coming: then shall He Himself recompense us with true glory. "Until the Lord come . . . and then shall every man have praise from God" (1 Cor. iv. 5). Let us live as holy members of His mystical Body, as St. Peter Damian calls us. Let us endeavour to be the chiefest of Christ's members by sanctity of life, as, according to St. Gregory, we are the first in dignity. Let us prepare ourselves for receiving Jesus Christ spiritually into our hearts, at the Feast of His holy Nativity, that so at the great Day of Judgment we may appear as the most glorious of His members.

"Come, Lord Jesus."—*Apocalypse* xxii. 20.

"That they may see Thy glory, which the Father has given Thee."—*St. John* xvii. 24.

WEDNESDAY.

HOW BRIGHT WILL BE THE SPLENDOUR OF THE INDELIBLE CHARACTER OF ORDER IN HOLY PRIESTS.

I. BECAUSE THIS IS THE ONLY DIGNITY WHICH WILL REMAIN IN THAT DAY.

II. BECAUSE IT WILL SHINE, NOT ONLY IN THE SOUL, BUT ALSO IN THE BODY.

III. BECAUSE IT WILL THEN BE GIVEN IN RECOMPENSE FOR THE ENDURANCE OF PAST REPROACHES.

"When these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand."—*St. Luke* xxi. 28.

1. *Look up.* Behold, O Priests, in the last great day, the extinction of all dignities. Now, the great ones of this world die, but greatness dies not; sovereigns die, but sovereignty lives on, for, as one prince dies, another succeeds him; hence the wise man beheld the great of the earth hunted and trodden down by those who came after them: "I saw all men living, that walk under the sun, with the second young man who shall rise up in his place" (Eccles. iv. 15). Then greatness itself, sovereignty itself, shall vanish, and Jesus Christ shall appear, in His full power, the only Great One, the only and sovereign Lord. "Great is our Lord, and great is His power" (Ps. cxlvi. 5). Magistrates, princes, emperors, will sleep the sleep of death, and in the resurrection no remains of authority will be found in their hands: "They have slept their sleep, and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands" (Ps. lxxv. 6). They were great as long as the scene of their life was on this world's stage; but, as St. *Paul says to the* Corinthians (1 vii. 31), "The fashion of this world

passeth away." But it is not so with Priests: their character is indelible; their dignity alone will remain to all eternity, and be resplendent in the face of the universe. If it remain indelible for the punishment of the reprobate, it will equally remain indelible for the recompense of the elect, as says St. Augustine. And, as he says again, when Jesus Christ our Lord comes to judgment, He will not efface His own character in His ministers.

2. *And lift up your heads.* Then holy Priests will lift up their sacred heads—those heads which had received the imposition of hands—they will raise them out of the dust of the tomb, in which their natural body was sown, "to be raised a spiritual body," as says St. Paul (1 Cor. xv.); that is, they will be endowed with the gifts meet for a spiritual body. They themselves will see, and the world will see, their dignity. The sacerdotal character will be resplendent even in their bodies; for, as St. Thomas teaches, the glory of the body will be caused by the glory of the soul, and this glory will be spiritual in the soul, and corporeal in the body; and the greater the glory of the soul, the greater will be the glory of the body. Those members will be more especially resplendent which were employed in the functions of the ministry, which nourished men daily with the Flesh of Jesus Christ, and which preserved holy chastity in the midst of temptation. Hence it was that the first Priests of the New Testament groaned within themselves, "waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of their bodies" (Rom. viii. 23). Then shall their voices be raised to praise God, those voices which glorified Him during their mortal life; and with their bodily eyes shall they see the glory of their divine Head. For as Isaias says (lii. 8), "the voice of thy watchmen: they have lifted up their voice, they shall praise together: for they shall see eye to eye." May these considerations aid us to keep our bodies in sanctity and honour; let us not abandon them to corruption and concupiscence: "in santification and honour, not in the passion of lust" (1 Thess. iv. 4, 5).

3. *Because your redemption is at hand.* Then, O Priests, shall you be freed from the calumnies of the world, and your prayer, "Redeem me from *the calumnies of* men" (Ps. cxviii. 134), will

be fully answered. The world knew not Christ; it despised Him and calumniated Him: neither does the world recognise the dignity of His Priests; it despises them and calumniates them: "We are without honour . . . even unto this hour" (1 Cor. iv. 10, 11). But then the scene will change, and the world will see, as says St. Prosper, that Priests were the ornament of the Church; that, as St. Augustine says, they were angelical men; that, as St. Clement says, they were, after God, terrestrial gods. St. Cyril remarks that God ordered Moses to number the people in order to show that He kept His elect numbered in the book of life; but He ordered the Levites to be numbered apart, in order to sohw that Priests are written down in other books. So does this holy father explain the prophecy of Daniel, "The judgment sat and the books were opened" (Dan. vii. 10). Then shall worldly men behold with the dark envious eyes of Aman how the King of kings causes His Mordechais to be honoured: "thus shall he be honoured whom the king hath a mind to honour" (Esther vi. 9). Let us then bear injuries with meekness, let us bear labours with patience, and all the trials to which it is the will of our King to expose us, with the certain hope of future happiness. The day will come when God will recompense us for all we have suffered. Let us not lose our confidence in God, which will have a great reward; rather let us revive it during this holy season of Advent, which brings to our remembrance the mercies of our Saviour.

"Judge my judgment and redeem me: quicken Thou me for Thy word's sake."—*Ps.* cxviii. 154.

"O Lord, have mercy on us; for we have waited for Thee."—*Is.* xxxiii. 2.

THURSDAY.

THE EXULTATION OF HOLY PRIESTS IN THAT DAY WHEN THEY SHALL SEE THE FRUIT OF THEIR LABOURS.

I. BECAUSE THEIR LABOURS WILL BE MANIFEST.
II. BECAUSE THEY WILL BE APPLAUDED BY ALL.
III. BECAUSE THEY WILL BE BLESSED BY MANY.

"And he spoke to them a similitude: See the fig-tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh: so you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand."—*St. Luke* xxi. 29–31.

1. *See the fig-tree, and all the trees; when they shoot forth their fruit.* The fig-tree and other trees are not inactive during the winter season, but their vegetative power operates secretly, and does not manifest itself till the approach of summer, as Origen explains the corresponding passage in St. Matthew. In like manner the labours of the Priesthood are now ignored by the world, but in that day they will be made manifest to the whole human race. Among all trees mention is made only of the fig-tree, because in the fig many seeds are contained in a delicious juice, enclosed within one skin; and therefore it is a lively image of the Church and her ministers, who enclose all the faithful in a holy oneness by the sweetness of charity. Then will appear the happy results of the masses they have celebrated, of the sacraments they have administered, of the instructions they have given to the people; then will come to light their good examples, their prayers, their works of mercy. Then, O Priests, "shall you see, and abound, and your heart shall wonder and be enlarged" (Is. lx. 5). Then *shall the holy ministers* of the altar see all the evils

which they have averted, and all the good results which, through the long series of ages, will be traced to their ministry; for the good and evil which they have wrought dies not with them. "Good things continue with their seed; their posterity are a holy inheritance" (Eccles. xliv. 11). Moreover, the Gospel labourers will reap publicly not only the reward of the good which has been accomplished by their work, but also the reward of the good which, by the faults of others and not their own, has failed of accomplishment. Herein they differ from this world's husbandmen, who enjoy that fruit only which they have really reaped, as St. Chrysostom says: "Although the land we till bring forth no fruit, yet, if we withdraw not our labour, the Lord gives us our reward."

2. *Summer is nigh.* In summer, at the time of harvest, the labours of the husbandmen are recognised. Then the lord of the harvest comes to see the harvest, and is the first to applaud the industry of his labourers. Jesus Christ will come in the consummation of the world: "The harvest is the end of the world" (St. Matt. xiii. 39); the good husbandmen will rejoice at beholding it more abundant than they even anticipated, and "shall rejoice, as they that rejoice in the harvest" (Is. ix. 3). For then, all passions being at rest, the whole human race will, with one voice, applaud those who have promoted the worship of God and the salvation of souls; while as to the conquerors of kingdoms, the philosophers of antiquity, and the politicians who have arrogantly governed nations, their glory will be the subject of abomination and contempt: "his glory is dung, and worms" (1 Mach. ii. 62). All agree that he who has taken good care of his master's servants and animals, deserves to be rewarded by his master. How much more, then, do Priests merit reward, who have taken care of God's children, of men who have cost their Lord His Precious Blood! St. Chrysostom admirably develops this thought in his work "On the Priesthood." Yet more, Priests will derive honour from the very condemnation of obstinate sinners, because they will prove the justice of the sentence launched upon them by the Judge, and will cause His solemn judgment to be more and more triumphant —"that thou mayst be justified in thy words, and mayst overcome *when thou art judged*" (Ps. l. 6). Willingly will they subscribe

this sentence, since it will redound to the glory of God, and to their own: "to execute upon them the judgment that is written; this glory is to all His saints" (Ps. cxlix. 9).

3. *The kingdom of God is at hand.* At the approach of that moment, when the elect will together triumphantly enter the Kingdom, they will say to Priests, as St. Chrysostom observes, "Your lips are the blessed instruments." The blessings which the people of Bethulia showered upon Judith, by whose hands God delivered them from impending destruction, represent the blessings which the elect will invoke upon their Priests in that day: "They all blessed her with one voice" (Judith xv. 10). If their memory was blessed even during this mortal life, what wonder is it if they and their labours shall be blessed in that day? "Blessed be you of the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. cxiii. 15). The reason for this blessing was expressed by the Holy Spirit in the praises of Simon the high priest: "He took care of his nation, and delivered it from destruction" (Eccles. l. 4); that is, the care which the Priest has taken of those committed to him, by which he has saved them from destruction, and has enabled them to conquer the kingdom of God. Let us then sustain the labours of our ministry, and let us await the day of recompense. Let us not seek for fruit in the winter of this life; let us await the summer which is not far off; let us provide ourselves with all those things "which will make us to be neither empty nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter i. 8). Let us sanctify this season of Advent, and make ready a pure dwelling-place for our Lord Jesus Christ in our own hearts, and in the hearts of the faithful committed to our charge. Let us all endeavour to procure the peace of a quiet conscience, in order that we may not fear the coming judgment, as St. Augustine exhorts.

"At Thy Right Hand are delights even to the end."—*Ps.* xv. 11.

"I will praise Thee, O God, my Saviour, for Thou hast been a helper and protector to me."—*Eccles.* li. 1, 2.

FRIDAY.

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT OF PRIESTS.

I. WE SHOULD CONSIDER ITS NEARNESS.
II. WE SHOULD MEDITATE HOW IT WILL UNDECEIVE US.
III. WE SHOULD FEAR ITS SEVERITY.

"Amen, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."—*St. Luke* xxi. 32, 33.

1. *This generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled.* Although we may suppose the general judgment to be far off, yet the particular judgment is as near as our death, as St. Bonaventure observes, commenting on the Book of Wisdom. Now for all men the general judgment depends on the particular judgment; their sentence is then decreed and their position fixed; they can change neither for good nor for evil. The day of death is the last day of the world for each one of us, and therefore in Holy Scripture these two judgments are brought near the one to the other, and described as imminent: "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and exceeding swift" (Sophon. i. 14). So that, even in this sense, we may explain the words, "this generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled." But to Priests especially, to whom "power is given by the Lord, and strength by the Most High," and who are "ministers of His kingdom," it is said, "speedily will He appear to you" (Wisdom vi. 4, 5, 6). The thought of the near approach of judgment should be revived within us by the consideration of the judgment which has been already passed on so many Priests, whom we have known, and who were summoned before the tribunal of Christ when they least expected it. They each one say to us: "Remember my judgment,

for thine also shall be so; yesterday for me, and to-day for thee" (Eccles. xxxviii. 23). Perhaps already the Lord, "through the trials of sickness, points out that death is at hand." Perhaps thy heart will not open to the Judge as He knocks; perhaps it fears to see Him as that judge whom it remembers to have scorned. Examine thyself on this point, and delay not to prepare thyself.

2. *Heaven and earth shall pass away.* At the hour of death all that we see in this heaven and in this earth passes away for us; for the world passes away, and all that is pleasing to our appetites; "the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof" (1 John ii. 17). Then "shall the eyes of the blind be opened" (Is. xxxv. 5); then shall we discover that if we had judged ourselves carefully we should not have been condemned by the dreadful sentence of God (1 Cor. xi. 31). Then shall we perceive that we ought to have prepared ourselves every day of our lives to appear before our Judge; so should we not have feared His coming, as St. Augustine tells us. Then shall we understand that, as St. Gregory says, He has deferred His coming in order to find in us less matter for condemnation. How will the obligations of the sacerdotal state, how will the failings of which we have thought so little—how will they in that day be regarded by us? for that is the day in which deception will be at an end. Habit has made us look on many faults as matters of no moment, which our neglected conscience will then regard in their true light in that terrible moment. St. Bernard says, "in a neglected conscience, habit is wont to make out most faults as natural." May this awful thought cause us to fear, and fear will be the happy means of our salvation. So St. Augustine in his Commentary on the 146th Psalm: "fear brings forth security; for, being frightened, we take precautions; taking these precautions we shall be safe."

3. *My words shall not pass away.* The words of the Son of Man, who has threatened to demand more of him who has received more, will not pass away. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required; and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more" (St. Luke xii. 48). And in truth Jesus Christ has given much to Priests. The *many instructions they have* heard, the many good books

they have read, the many good examples they have received, the eager desires of their flocks for their good success, the grace of so many sacraments, and especially the grace of Order,—all these things are, as it were, an immense capital, of which their Lord will exact the interest. We cannot tell Him that we received nothing, or nothing which enabled us to become better, as St. Ambrose reminds us. Most severe, therefore, will be the judgment for that which we have received, and in proportion to the number of our obligations, which corresponds with the elevation of our rank; by reason also of their importance as affecting the honour of God and the salvation of souls; and because of their easiness, which will become clear to us when we see the good effected by other Priests with the self-same means. Much was committed to their charge—that is, "that which is the true" (St. Luke xvi. 11). True treasures have been confided to them—treasures which are to form the happiness of the faithful. Nor can they allege ignorance as their excuse as lay persons might. St. Chrysostom says: "they cannot lay the blame on want of instruction, nor can they take refuge in ignorance, nor can they plead necessity or compulsion." We have been the masters and the judges of others, and therefore in condemning their sins we have condemned our own: "for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself" (Rom. ii. 1). Or have we thought, perhaps, that, judging others, we should ourselves escape the judgment of God? "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God" (Rom. ii. 3). St. Bonaventure says that the judgment of him who has had power in the Church will be "hard for him who has begun ill, harder for him who has lived ill, hardest for him who has ruled ill." Let us then prepare for this strict judgment by a life worthy of our calling. "Before judgment prepare thee justice" (Eccles. xviii. 19). Let us remember that our Judge will come upon us like a thief, even as He threatened a bishop of His Church: "I will come to thee as a thief" (Apoc. iii. 3).

"Save me, O God, by Thy Name, and judge me in Thy strength."—*Ps.* liii. 3.

"But thou, O Lord of Sabaoth, Who judgest justly, and triest the reins and *the hearts."—Jerem.* xi. 20.

SATURDAY.

MEDITATION ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY WILL MAKE PRIESTS BETTER UNDERSTAND THREE USEFUL TRUTHS:

I. THE HORROR THAT GOD HAS OF SIN.
II. THE DISPOSITIONS NECESSARY FOR THE SACERDOTAL DIGNITY.
III. THE PREPARATION REQUISITE FOR THE SACRED FUNCTIONS.

"Of whom was born Jesus."—*St. Matt.* i. 16.

1. *Jesus was born of Mary.* She is, then, the true, worthy Mother of God. Hence God would not suffer that She should ever be infected with the guilt either of original or of actual sin; and therefore St. Augustine says: "In treating of sins, I entirely exclude any question whatever as to the Holy Virgin Mary."

The Eternal Father would not that the woman whom He had destined to be the Mother of His Son, should ever be subject to the law of sin: "This law is not made for thee, but for all others" (Esther xv. 13). The Son prevented Her by the efficacy of His Blood from ever incurring the common stain, and thus she was preserved even from her entrance into the world. "May the Lord keep thy coming in" (Ps. cxx. 7). The Holy Spirit would not suffer His spouse to be defiled by any stain, and made her all beautiful and without spot: "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee" (Cant. iv. 7). Now all this shows us the hatred which God has of sin. "To God, the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike" (Wisd. xiv. 9). It shows us also what hatred God's ministers should have of it, and that like Him they should look *upon it as the supreme* evil, the only evil, the true evil;

that they should labour "that sin may have an end" (Dan. ix. 24); that they should never cease from resisting sin, "striving against sin" (Heb. xii. 4). Let us examine ourselves on this head, and let us implore of Our Blessed Lady the grace to preserve in our hearts an immense hatred of this monster. Let us ask her to bring often to our remembrance that grand sentence of St. Gregory: "God endures no greater injury from others than that which we Priests commit against Him when we, who should have crushed sin, fall into it ourselves." Let us invoke her in our temptations, which are wont to be so violent, for, as St. Cyril tells us, our adversary the devil assails Priests with even greater violence than that which he employs against laymen.

2. Mary, destined to the Divine Maternity, crushed the head of the serpent from the first moment of her conception. The dragon, who had infected so many with his poison, sought also to infect her, and so to make her his slave. Great had been his joy could he have enslaved the Mother of God, the Queen of the Universe. But his snares were in vain, for the divine prediction, "she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. iii. 15), was fulfilled; God made manifest His power, breaking the pride of Lucifer by means of a maiden: "the weak things of the world hath God chosen" (1 Cor. i. 27). He showed His Wisdom, making use of the Second Eve, as St. Augustine says, to repair the ruin which the first Eve had suffered from Lucifer; He displayed His Goodness, not choosing that the Supreme Incarnate Good should dwell in a house in which the author of pride had set his foot. "He that worketh pride shall not dwell in the midst of my house" (Ps. c. 7). Now if Almighty God prepared Mary in this way for the dignity of being His Mother, is it not to be supposed that He would have priests prepare themselves with all care for their dignity, and would have their lives to correspond with the sublime positions which they occupy in His Church? It is certain that God puts the sacerdotal dignity before any other dignity whatsoever, so that St. Bernard says: "O Blessed Virgin, pardon me, for I detract not from Thy honour when I say that He has set the Priesthood even above *Thee.*"

What shame, then, should it be to a Priest to have been, were it only once, vanquished by Lucifer, to have become his slave, to have let him reign in his heart! What can be more monstrous than at once to occupy a sublime position, and to lead a life sunk in the degradation of sin? Not without reason was it required, in ancient times, that those only should be promoted to Holy Orders who had preserved their baptismal innocence; and more reasonably still does St. Paul demand that the Priest be "just, holy" (Titus i. 8). Let us seriously ponder this truth, and let us wash away with tears of true repentance those sins which have rendered us unworthy of our sublime vocation.

3. The Blessed Virgin was prepared for the great offices she was to exercise, of conceiving, of bearing, of bringing forth, of nourishing, of offering, and of appeasing the Son of God. She was prepared for them by becoming "a Paradise of pleasure, planted by the Lord God" (Gen. ii. 8); "a Propitiatory of the purest gold" (Ex. xxxvii. 7); "the Tabernacle of God, sanctified by the Most High" (Ps. xlv. 5); "the throne of the Lord, shining as the sun" (Ps. lxxxviii. 38); "the Lily among thorns" (Cant. ii. 2); "the Unspotted Mirror of God's Goodness" (Wisdom vii. 26). Now we Priests have also most exalted functions to fulfil. St. Augustine says, that in the venerable hands of Priests, the Son of God becomes as it were incarnate. We have to bear this God in our hands, and to offer Him to the Eternal Father, in order to appease His wrath; we have to bring Him forth in the hearts of men, for the Priest, as St. Gregory says, "becomes in preaching, as it were, a mother to Christ, for he produces Him in the hearts of his hearers." But what are our remote as well as our proximate dispositions for these august functions? Can it be said of each one of us that he arranges in his heart the steps by which he may mount so high? "In his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps" (Ps. lxxxiii. 6). Our virtue ought to aim at the highest standard, and this is to be attained by the fervent exercise of piety, holiness, and religion, whereby we may dispose ourselves aright to handle and to minister such tremendous mysteries. Let us then beseech the Blessed Virgin that, by the glory of Her Immaculate *Conception*, She would dispose us for our sacred

functions, and, at least, never suffer us to administer the sacraments in mortal sin.

"Glorious things are said of Thee, O City of God."—*Ps.* lxxxv. 3.

"The Lord has blessed thee by His power, because by thee He hath brought our enemies to nought."—*Judith* xiii. 22.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

PRIESTS OUGHT TO TRAIN UP DISCIPLES FOR JESUS CHRIST.

I. ZEALOUS PRIESTS GAIN MANY DISCIPLES.
II. THEY SHOW THEM THEIR VOCATION.
III. THEY INSTRUCT THEM IN THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"When John had heard in prison the works of Christ: sending two of his disciples he said to Him: Art thou He that art to come, or look we for another?"—*St. Matt.* xi. 2, 3.

1. *When John had heard in prison the works of Christ.* The Baptist was in chains for God's cause; it is not likely that such will be our lot, yet other kinds of chains, of prisons, are in store for us. Cornelius à Lapide, quoting many passages of Holy Scripture, observes that maladies are called rocks, and the bed of sickness is compared to a prison. Infirmities will come upon us; old age, which is itself a disease, may perhaps overtake us; and then to whom shall we confide the work of our ministry? If we have not trained up good disciples, who shall succeed us in our labours? The disciple then becomes "the light of our eyes, the staff of our old age, the hope of our posterity" (Tobias x. 4). Almighty God has decreed that sons should be born to spiritual *fathers: "instead of thy* fathers, sons are born to thee" (Ps. xliv. 17).

He has decreed that this should be our holy inheritance: "their posterity are a holy inheritance . . . . and their children for their sakes remain for ever" (Eccles. xliv. 12, 13); therefore did the Apostle impress on his own disciple Timothy, that he, in his turn, should train up others to aid him in the ministry of the word: "The things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also" (2 Tim. ii. 2). In these words he recommended him to take special care to instruct in sound doctrine and in piety, youths of promise, who might afterwards become Priests and Doctors of the Church, as St. Ambrose says. Do we not know that the young are docile and easily formed to good? St. Jerome says: "They have something pliant and soft in them which can be easily trained." The good master must work for a little while, but afterwards fruits of holiness will be gathered without any difficulty: "afterwards it will yield to them that are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice" (Heb. xii. 11). Our disciples will be a great joy to us throughout eternity, for "a wise son maketh a father joyful" (Prov. xv. 20). Let us then follow the example of our Lord's Precursor, whose disciples are praised in the Gospel; let us follow the example of our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, Who also trained up His disciples; let us follow the example of those many illustrious Doctors of the Church who imitated their Divine Master in this respect. If we have neglected it hitherto, let us repent; let us meditate on the loss which the Church has sustained through our negligence, and let us pray to God that He would give us grace to leave good successors by way of reparation for our fault. Thus shall we imitate Elias, of whom the wise man said; "He made prophets successors after him" (Eccles. xlviii. 8).

2. *Sending two of his disciples.* We shall send our disciples to Jesus Christ if we know how to introduce them to the state of life to which Jesus Christ calls them; if we discern their vocation and cause them to follow it. This is the meaning of directing them to eternal felicity, for St. Basil says: "O man, if you fear Hell, if you aspire to Heaven, despise not your vocation." St. Thomas teaches that when God destines a young man for a par-

ticular state, He furnishes him with all the aids and graces which will enable him faithfully to fulfil the duties of his office. Let the master then impress upon his disciples the use of prayer, as the best means of obtaining light from God, and let him make them say with the Psalmist, "Make the way known to me wherein I should walk" (Ps. cxlii. 9). Let him endeavour to make them ask counsel of the wise and prudent: "Seek counsel always of a wise man" (Tobias iv. 19). Further, let him make known to them the dangers of many professions and pursuits which it is almost impossible, if not quite impossible, to follow without sin, as St. Gregory teaches. Let him remind them of what our Saviour said to the young man: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (St. Matt. xix. 21). If some show signs of vocation to the Priesthood, he must encourage and aid them, and so bestow a great gift upon the Church; but, on the other hand, he must dissuade from it those in whom such signs are wanting; for, as St. Ambrose says, "it is not sufficient to offer oneself for such an office, but there must be a divine call." But, oh! what need have we of divine light in order not to be mistaken in this matter! What ruin will bad advice occasion to ill-directed souls, and to the whole Church! What a solemn account will Directors have to give before the great Tribunal of God.

3. *And said to Him: Art thou He that art to come, or look we for another?* St. John sent his disciples, not through ignorance or in order to satisfy himself, for on a former occasion he had himself pointed out our Lord, and had baptized Him; but he sent them in order that they might also gain a true knowledge of Him, by drawing near to Him; so that, as St. Jerome tells us, the question of the Master might contribute to the better instruction of the disciples. In like manner should zealous Priests send their disciples to Jesus Christ, by advancing them in the knowledge, imitation, and love of the Eternal Master. This is life eternal, truly to know Jesus Christ: "Now this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou *hast sent*" (St. John xvii. 3). Faith in Jesus Christ, and the virtue

of true piety, are the root and origin of eternal life. So St. Cyril. We must use every effort to prevent our disciples from being reckoned among the number of those bad Christians who seem to expect another Messias according to their own fancy; a Messias, that is to say, who does not preach penance, self-denial, and the Cross, but the love of riches, honours, and worldly pleasures. Finally, happy is that Priest who can say to his disciples: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. iv. 16). Let him be the first to make it his study to know Jesus Christ and to imitate Him in all things, and then his disciples will become "fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. i. 10). Have we done so hitherto? Or is it otherwise in our case? Let us examine ourselves carefully, and see whether our example or advice has ever been a hindrance to the young in the way of their progress towards Christ. Let us call to mind the threats which He has uttered against those who give scandal, and let us tremble.

"The angel that delivereth me from all evils, bless these boys."—*Gen.* xlviii. 16.

"O Lord, turn not away Thy face from Thy servant."—*Ps.* lxviii. 18.

MONDAY.

THE GREAT MERITS WHICH A PRIEST MAY GATHER FROM AMONG HIS PEOPLE.

I. By his words.
II. By his example.
III. By his administration of the Sacraments.

"And Jesus making answer said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them, and blessed is he that shall not be scandalised in Me."—*St. Matt.* xi. 4, 5, 6.

1. *What you have heard.* St. Thomas observes that our Saviour proved His mission in teaching. He admitted John's disciples to His instructions, which made Him known as "a teacher of justice," as Joel predicted (ii. 23). Now, when a Priest, a follower of the Great High Priest, employs himself in teaching justice and in instructing the ignorant, he becomes the source of immense benefits to the human race. Arnobius says there is no nation so barbarous and cruel that has not cast off its ferocity for the love of Jesus Christ, and become mild and tractable. As morality was reformed and improved through the preaching of the first priests, so does sacerdotal preaching, in these days, either reform the morals of a people, or preserve them in their purity. So Eusebius. The Priest inculcates respect for the bond of matrimony as a great sacrament, and prescribes the duties of that state, according to the teaching of St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians (v. 25, 32) and to the Hebrews (xiii. 4), and that of Ecclesiasticus (vii. 27, 28). He impresses on children the honour due to their parents, adding promises and threats even of earthly blessings and of earthly suffering respectively, as Holy *Scripture declares* in Exodus (xx. 12) and in Ecclesiasticus (iii.).

He excites all to labour, and to fulfil the duties of their own state of life, inspiring them with a horror of idleness and negligence, thus following the teaching of Holy Scripture in Proverbs (vi. 6; xii. 11; xiii. 8; xv. 9), in Ecclesiasticus (xxii. 1; xxxiii. 29), and in Ezechiel (xvi. 49). To all he uses these words of the Apostle: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another, for he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. xiii. 8). He endeavours to lead all to perfection, repeating, "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (St. Matt. v. 48). How great benefit can we confer on the faithful by such teaching, and what consolation is there not in giving it! How great a reward will not he merit who has done so; what remorse, what punishment awaits him who has neglected it! With good reason did St. Clement declare that Priests were to be honoured as benefactors of mankind, and the masters of virtuous living.

2. *And seen.* Jesus Christ was not content to speak only, but He would act also, because, as St. Chrysostom says, the testimony of acts is more worthy of belief than the testimony of words. We too must set forth examples conformable to our teaching, for, as St. Jerome says, this proves the accuracy and the truth of him who teaches. Let us then manifest ourselves as soldiers of Christ; let us show that we do not mix ourselves up with worldly affairs, but that we employ ourselves only in divine and spiritual things. St. Basil urges us thus: "Onwards, soldier of Christ, let the thought of eternal reward sustain your courage. Let the life which you live now be without home or country or profession; be detached and free from all the cares of this world." Since we are without wives, let us turn all our cares to God, for "he that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God" (1 Cor. vii. 32), and as St. Paul says in the same epistle (ix. 22), let us make ourselves *all things to all men, that we may gain all to Christ.* The hearts of the Faithful will be gained by the good examples set before them, and the detractors of the Priesthood will be silenced. "Having your conversation good among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak *against you as evil*-doers, they may by the good

works which they shall behold in you glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. ii. 12). Woe to the Priest who gives scandal instead of good example to the Faithful! He no longer merits well of society, but declares himself the enemy of God, of himself, and of the Faithful. Deliver me from such a miserable lot, O my God: rather take away my life.

3. *The blind see.* St. Chrysostom here observes that Jesus Christ, by working miracles before the disciples of John, desired to make His teaching more manifest, and to set it above all suspicion. We Priests have not the gift of miracles, but we can work miracles of another and a higher order—that is to say, in the soul of man, by leading him to true holiness. It is precisely in this sense that the Angelic Doctor explains the gradation of the miracles enumerated by our Saviour: "By this is signified the whole process of the sanctification of man." By means of the sacraments of which we are the ministers, and by impressing the Faithful with the dispositions necessary for receiving them worthily, we cure that blindness which darkens the reason; we restore the lame whose minds are drawn hither and thither; we heal the leprosy which infects men's souls; we cure that deafness which makes men insensible to the divine judgments; finally, we recall to the life of grace those who were dead in sin, and we raise them out of the abject poverty into which they had fallen. Then, when we have thus restored health to the Faithful, they acquire a solidity of mind, and are constituted in that peace which suffers no scandal: "much peace have they that love Thy law, and to them there is no stumbling-block" (Ps. cxviii. 165). In this way are those other words verified: "'Blessed is he that shall not be scandalised in Me." Let us meditate deeply on these profound truths, let us fulfil the duties of our ministry, and so shall we deserve well of mankind; so shall we acquire great merit before God, and so shall we fulfil His will, and thus supply an unanswerable refutation to the impudent calumnies with which His enemies and ours assail us. "For so is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Pet. ii. 15). Let us not be vanquished by sloth, let us imitate *laborious priests, let* us resolve never to lose time, and let us

pray to God for those slothful priests who so often give the evil-disposed an excuse for looking upon the entire ecclesiastical order as useless. Let us pray that even they may yet labour with constancy, so that all the Faithful may glorify their Heavenly Father.

"Direct Thou the works of our hands over us; yea, the work of our hands do Thou direct."—*Ps.* lxxxix. 17.

"Remember me, O my God, for good according to all that I have done for this people."—2 *Esdras* v. 19.

TUESDAY

THE PRIEST WHO IS AS A REED SHAKEN WITH THE WIND IS NOT PLEASING TO JESUS CHRIST.

I. How this disgraces a priest.
II. When this vice manifests itself in him.
III. What he must do to avoid it.

"And when they went their way, Jesus began to say concerning John, What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind?"—*St. Matt.* xi. 7.

1. *And when they went their way, Jesus began to say concerning John.* Our Saviour waited till John's disciples had departed before He praised him, in order that it might not be supposed that He praised him in order to obtain their favour; as St. Chrysostom says, "that he might not seem to flatter man." In this way He has taught us not to praise men when they are present. *Let not adulation,* says a saint, *move the praiser, nor elation the praised.* But how can a Priest be praised, who is a reed shaken with the *wind?* He is called to be the tree on which

the birds dwell: "it becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof" (St. Matt. xiii. 32); such, that is to say, that the souls confided to Priests may be refreshed by their words and their consolations, as St. Gregory explains. He is planted in the house of God to be, not a reed, but a fruitful olive-tree: "a plentiful olive-tree, fair, fruitful, and beautiful, the Lord called thy name" (Jerem. xi. 16). He is destined to be a pillar which sustains the temple: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God" (Apoc. iii. 12); "the high priest who . . . propped up the house . . . fortified the temple" (Eccles. l. 1). What ruin will come upon the building, if this pillar bends like a reed! St. Bonaventure says that it belongs to Priests to be the roof of the tabernacle; and hence, as the roof must sustain the torrent of rain and hail if the interior of the building is to be kept dry, so must they bear up under all adversities if they would defend souls from the whirlwind of sin. They are the standard-bearers in the war against our spiritual enemies; and therefore, as St. Chrysostom says, not in war only, but also in peace they require their utmost strength. They must be masters of fortitude, which is a cardinal virtue; they must preach it both by example and by word, consequently timidity and weakness cannot be tolerated in them; and, as St. Cyril says, they must bring no imperfect fortitude, no enfeebled firmness to their work.

2. *What went you out into the desert to see?* You went out, said Jesus Christ, to see a man who was steadfast and firm (as St. Thomas explains); but there are many Priests of whom this cannot be said. Their weakness is soon manifest to their flocks, for (as the Council of Trent tells us) men's eyes are always turned to the Priest, and his defects are easily discovered. St. Jerome says that the flock perceives that the Priest is a reed shaken by the wind, when he preaches in such wise as to procure vainglory for himself or temporal gain. Men find this out also when they perceive that he easily yields to some passion or temptation; for, as St. Augustine says, passions and temptations are the winds which agitate our souls. On the contrary, fortitude is recognised in a Priest who presents the five characteristics *enumerated by St.* Ambrose: 1st, he conquers himself; 2nd, he

curbs his anger; 3rd, he is not bent by flattery; 4th, he is not disturbed in adversity; 5th, he is not puffed up in prosperity. But how few Priests possess these virtues! By inconstancy in the work of the ministry, by breaking good resolutions, by fickleness in their manner of life, by giving way before the great men of this world—in such ways do they prove before God and before men that they are "children tossed to and fro" (Eph. iv. 14). And yet they ought, as St. Bernard says, "to represent before kings the character of the Baptist, of Moses before the Egyptians, of Phineas in the case of those who commit fornication. They ought to be as Elias to the idolaters, as Eliseus to the covetous, as Peter to those who lie, as Paul to the blasphemous, as Christ to those who traffic; they should not be flatterers of the rich, but rather should cause them to tremble.

3. *A reed shaken with the wind?* If John was not a reed shaken by the wind, and if we would deserve the like praise, we must frequently meditate on the sources whence he derived his fortitude, and ourselves draw from the same sources. He attained it by the Holy Spirit, who "is the Spirit of strength, and who makes him a pillar of iron and a wall of brass" (Jerem. i. 18). Let us beseech the Divine Spirit that He would come into our hearts and give us that strength which of ourselves we cannot have, seeing we are by nature, as St. Ambrose says, but as reeds in weakness. Let us not place confidence in ourselves, for our strength is as "the ashes of tow" (Is. i. 31). Let us meditate on the eternal truths, because "his will is in the law of the Lord; who shall meditate on His law" (Ps. i. 2). St. Gregory tells us that John was not a reed shaken by the wind, precisely because of his continual meditations: "no variety of circumstances was wont to shake him from the uprightness of his course." Finally, let us propose to ourselves one single aim in all our works, viz., to please God; for he cannot be constant who, at the same time, would please both God and men: "a double-minded man is inconstant in all his ways" (St. James i. 8). The Baptist, throughout his whole life, sought God alone; and therefore he merited the praise of Jesus Christ, which, as St. Chrysostom says, *took from him all suspicion* of inconstancy. In like manner let

us hope to be firm "in wisdom as the sun, not changed as the moon" (Eccles. xxvii. 12). I resolve, O my God, to be firm in the fulfilment of my duties; but I do not place my confidence in this resolution, but in Thee, Who art the strength of the weak.

"In my abundance I said, I shall never be moved."—*Ps.* xxix. 7.

"The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like the feet of harts."—*Habacuc* iii. 19.

WEDNESDAY.

THE CLERICAL HABIT.

I. THE CLERICAL HABIT EDIFIES THE BEHOLDERS.
II. IT CONDEMNS THE LUXURY OF THE WORLD.
III. IT SHOWS WHO IS OUR KING.

"But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings."—*St. Matt.* xi. 8.

1. *But what went you out to see?* The people went out in crowds to see John, and were edified at beholding how he was clothed: "he had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins" (St. Matt. iii. 4). Crowds still look on Priests, and as they cannot examine the holiness of the heart, they draw conclusions in regard to it from the outward dress; therefore the Council of Trent orders that the clerical habit be always worn, "in order that the purity of our manners may be shewn by the decency of our external habit." People believe their eyes sooner than their ears, and hence are more edified by dress and bearing than by discourses. Moreover the Priest, by this habit, gains respect for himself and for the whole clerical order, and thus promotes the edification of the Faithful. Let us

meditate carefully on these words of the wise man: "A man is known by his look . . . the attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth and the gait of the man shew what he is" (Eccles. xix. 26, 27). What great profit might we have brought to the Church before now if we had been more careful in our exterior; what merit have we lost by neglecting this matter, which appears to us of so little importance; what account shall we have to give to God for it!

2. *A man clothed in soft garments?* St. John preached penance, and condemned the luxury of the world by his very dress; St. Thomas says he did not consider even a woollen dress suitable for a preacher, as being too soft and luxurious. And what answer shall we make at the tribunal of God, we who are preachers, and who declaim against worldly luxury, if our clothing be delicate and luxurious? The Councils, with good reason, order clerics to show no vanity in their dress; their attire is not "to display levity or elation of mind." Their attire should exhibit a gravity as far removed from negligence as from pomp. He who from vainglory shows excessive care in adorning himself, does not appear, what it becomes a Priest to be, a judge of the world, but rather, as St. Augustine says, a follower of the world's pomps. Let us examine ourselves on this head, and let us fear lest we find ourselves in the number of those who are attired, says St. Jerome, as bridegrooms rather than as clerics. Let us remember that we ought not to clothe ourselves as bridegrooms, but as guardians of the Bride of Jesus Christ, which is the Church, according to the teaching of St. Bernard. Let us meditate on the scorn with which Almighty God will treat us if we depart from this teaching; let us meditate on the scorn with which the whole world will regard us in the day of judgment, when the vanities of the world will appear in their true light.

3. *They that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings.* If men clothed in soft raiment are to be seen in king's palaces, Priests, who dwell in the house of the King of kings, must not be so clothed. Our whole exterior should make manifest to the Faithful that the Priest is, as the Apostle calls himself, the servant of Jesus Christ (Rom. i. 1). The garment down to

the feet should represent Jesus, who was so clothed when He appeared to St. John (Apoc. i. 13). The black colour should not only move us to sorrow for the spiritual and corporal miseries of our own people, but also to humility of mind, inasmuch as we are ministers of Him who was humble of heart. St. Bernard says "black garments are suggestive of humility of mind." Our close-cut hair should remind us, as St. Thomas teaches, that our mind must not, through worldly occupations, forsake the contemplation of divine things. And if the cutting of the hair is to be moderate (that is to say, it is not to be shaved close, nor yet suffered to grow too long) this is to denote, as St. Gregory says, that the thought of the salvation of others must neither be wholly set aside, nor yet be allowed to increase so much as to induce us to forget our own soul. The crown of the tonsure should remind us of the Royal Priesthood and the obligation of perfection, since this circle is broken by no angles. "Those who celebrate the Divine mysteries," says St. Thomas, "enjoy a royal dignity, and ought to be perfect in virtue." Finally, it is a symbol of the crown of thorns, which Jesus Christ wore on His Head in token of humility. Whilst, then, by these signs we manifest to others the service to which we belong, we have also a continual incitement to separate ourselves from intercourse with the world, as St. Augustine says. We are also continually urged on to the pursuit of modesty and all other virtues, so that our actions may not give the lie to our professions. Let us admire the heavenly wisdom of the Church in giving us these mysterious and useful badges. Let us compassionate the blindness of so many of our brethren, who understand not these shining truths, and let us pray for their enlightenment. Let us resolve to reform everything in our attire which does not correspond with the aim of our Holy Mother, and to persevere therein even until death.

"Let Thy Priests be clothed with justice."—*Ps.* cxxxi. 9.

"Lord, Thou knowest my necessity, that I abominate the sign of my pride."—*Esther* xiv. 16.

THURSDAY.

PRIESTS SHOULD REGARD THEMSELVES AS THE PROPHETS OF THE NEW LAW.

I. THE FAITHFUL REGARD THEIR PRIESTS AS PROPHETS.
II. IN WHAT SENSE THEY ARE REALLY PROPHETS.
III. HOW THEY MAY BE CALLED MORE THAN PROPHETS.

"But what went you out to see? a prophet? yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet."—*St. Matt.* xi. 9.

1. *But what went you out to see?* The Hebrew people went into the desert to see and to hear John, because they esteemed him a Prophet: "for all held John as a prophet" (St. Matt. xxi. 26). The Christian people know that all the Prophets, even till John, predicted good things to come; "for all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (St. Matt. xi. 13). They know that God "at sundry times and in divers manners spoke" to men "by the prophets," and that finally "He spoke to them by His Son" (Heb. i. 1). But they also go to their Priests as to those who exercise the office conferred by God on the ancient Prophets. The title of Prophet was given to persons dear to God, and adorned with singular sanctity. So it was given to Abraham (Gen. xx. 7). It was also given to those who made profession of piety, and were dedicated to the service of God (3 Kings xviii. 13). It was likewise given to those who were engaged in the praises of God, and who by their hymns and canticles stirred up Divine love in the hearts of the people. Further, it was given to those who spoke in God's name, and who were the teachers of the people (St. Matt. xxiii. 34). Now the Faithful desire to see us precisely what these were, that *is to say, distinguished* for holiness, specially

dedicated to the worship of God, engaged in praising Him and in stirring up men to love Him, and always ready to speak of His holy law. Can we be reckoned among such prophets? Can we rest contented and satisfied that we have fulfilled these duties? Rather, how far am I from attaining that end, which Thou, O my God, hast set before me?

2. *A prophet.* John was truly a prophet, because, as St. Thomas tells us, the Spirit of the Lord had revealed to him those profound mysteries which he announced to the people. His father, Zachary, was certainly not in error when he foretold that his son should "be called the prophet" (St. Luke i. 76). We also are prophets when we announce to the Faithful the truths revealed to the Prophets, and fulfilled in Him who was the end of the Prophets, and which were preached by the Apostles who were full of the same Spirit that spake by the Prophets. For, according to the author of those commentaries on the Epistles, which have been attributed to St. Ambrose, "As the prophets of old foretold the unknown future, so he who declares the hidden meaning of the Scriptures may also be said to prophesy." Moreover, preachers foretell the future because they predict the rewards of the just, and the punishments of the wicked, as says Cornelius à Lapide. Finally, we confirm the prophecies, showing how the prophecies of the ancient saints are fulfilled in the Church, and they who confirm the prophecies are also called prophets (Eccles. xlix. 18). All this constitutes the glory of our ministry, but it will also constitute our condemnation, if we are like Balaam, who, although he was a prophet, allowed himself to be led away by avarice (Numbers xxii). And what will become of us if we are like Caiaphas, who was a prophet although he was a great sinner (St. John xi. 51). What will our punishment be if we are like those prophets, described in Ezechiel (xiii. 3—10), who follow their own spirit, and instead of reproving the people for their iniquities, deceive them by preaching to them a false peace? How terrible is the threat uttered against such prophets: "they shall not be in the counsel of my people, nor shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of *Israel*" (*Ezechiel* xiii. 9). Let us meditate on the gravity of this

threat; let us fear lest we be cancelled from the number of the Faithful and excluded from the land of the living. Before this threat be verified, let us examine our lives, and our teaching, that we may discover whether one and both are, or are not, conformable to the Gospel, and let us by prayer diligently prevent God's justice: "in the morning my prayer shall prevent Thee" (Ps. lxxxvii. 14). Let us place all our hope in God's word, who promises to save those who trust in Him, and let us raise up our voice to avert our condemnation, as the Psalmist teaches us: "I prevented the dawning of the day, and cried; because in Thy words I very much hoped" (Ps. cxviii. 147).

3. *Yea, I tell you, and more than a Prophet.* John was more than a prophet, for he prophesied things present, he prophesied them from his mother's womb, and moreover was both Baptist and Precursor. We, too, may look upon ourselves as more than prophets. They died in the time of the Law, which had but a shadow of the good things to come, and they beheld them only afar off, and saluted them afar off: "All these died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and saluting them" (Heb. xi. 13). We, on the contrary, have the Messias most near to us, we touch Him with our hands, we offer Him to the Eternal Father, we expose Him to the adoration of the Faithful, we carry Him through the streets, we feed on Him, we give Him to be fed on by others: "neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions" (Deut. iv. 7). They predicted grace and truth; we enjoy them and dispense them to the Faithful, for "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (St. John i. 17). They were not believed when they predicted future mysteries: "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa. liii. 1.) We find in children the habit of Faith infused in Holy Baptism, and therefore we have hearers all ready to receive the divine teaching: "and they shall all be taught of God" (St. John vi. 45). Who among the Prophets could remit sins as a Priest remits them? Who among the Prophets could change the substance of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of God? Thus it has been said that the Priest has the *Primacy of Abel and the* Patriarchate of Abraham. He

is, as Noe, the pilot of the Ark; his order is that of Melchisedech, his dignity that of Aaron, he has the authority of Moses, the virtue of Samuel, the power of Peter, the unction of Christ. Therefore our Saviour gave to us also the name of Prophets, and promised the reward of a prophet to those who should honour us and treat us well. "He that receiveth a Prophet in the name of a Prophet shall receive the reward of a Prophet" (St. Matt. x. 41). But have we, as the Angelic Doctor remarks in his exposition of this text, the justice and the sanctity which was the heritage of the Prophets? Have we that spirit of God which spoke by the mouth of the Prophets? Do we speak the Word of God to the people like the Prophets who were continually repeating: "Thus saith the Lord"? Let us pray to the Eternal Father during this holy season of Advent, that He would send us His Son to sanctify us in the truth. Let us pray to the Divine Son that He may be spiritually born within us, and that He may fill us with the Holy Spirit.

"Lord, send whom Thou wilt send."—*Exodus* iv. 13.
"Come, Lord Jesus."—*Apoc.* xxii. 20.

FRIDAY.

THE DIGNITY OF PRIESTS SURPASSES THAT OF ANGELS.

I. WHY WAS ST. JOHN CALLED AN ANGEL?
II. WHY HAVE PRIESTS THE SAME NAME?
III. WHY DOES THEIR DIGNITY SURPASS THE DIGNITY OF ANGELS?

"For this is He of whom it is written: Behold I send My Angel before Thy Face, Who shall prepare Thy way before Thee."—*St. Matt.* xi. 10.

1. *I send my Angel.* This was the title with which Christ would honour His Precursor; and this title had been already given him by the Prophet Malachias, when he foretold him to the world. He was so called: 1. Because he was an ambassador of God to men, which is the proper signification of the word *Angel*, as St. Thomas observes. 2. Because he, like the Angels, had no infancy, having prophesied from his mother's womb: "he knew not the impediments of infancy," as St. Ambrose says. 3. Because "he led an angelic life," by detachment from the world, as well as by chastity. 4. Because, according to St. Chrysostom, by contemplating God in the desert "he became familiar with Him, and conversed with Him after the manner of an angel." 5. Because "he never lost sanctifying grace," and kept his estate of innocence even as the angels preserved their first estate. So St. Peter Damian. 6. Because "he purified, illuminated, and perfected men," which is the office exercised by the higher choirs of the angels towards the lower, as St. Peter Chrysologus tells us. 7. Because in the desert he had no master save the Holy Spirit, who, as St. Bernard says, instructed him not as a man but as an angel. Let us congratulate *the Baptist* on his glorious privileges; let us

meditate on them so as to imitate this great model of sanctity, and let us implore his intercession in order that we may acquire the sanctity proper to our state.

2. *Before my face.* St. John was the Angel who preceded the King of Glory as His Precursor. But he is not alone in this office. Priests also, as St. Thomas says, are honoured in like manner by God: "when the King goes forth, many go in front of Him, but His more familiar friends go immediately before His Face." The Saviour follows His preachers, because preaching, says St. Gregory, precedes His Advent into the souls of the Faithful. Hence in Holy Scripture the Priest is called an Angel: "because he is the Angel of the Lord of Hosts" (Malachias ii. 7). The Apostle gives direction that women cover their heads in the churches, in order not to offend the eyes of the Angels: "because of the Angels" (1 Cor. xi. 10); that is to say, "because of the Priests," as St. Thomas explains. For this reason, when the Evangelist St. John would have adored the Angel, he said to him: "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren, the Prophets" (Apoc. xix. 10; xxii. 9). And the seven Bishops to whom God spoke by means of the same St. John, were called Angels: "the Angels of the seven churches" (Apoc. i. 20). The reason for so glorious a title is that it is the office of Priests also *to purify, illuminate, and perfect* the Faithful; they also are our Lord's messengers. St. Ambrose says: "the Priest is an Angel, who announces the kingdom of Christ and eternal life." And as the Angels "are ministering spirits, sent to minister" (Heb. i. 14), so, in the words of Tertullian, Priests exercise the ministry of salvation, and are therefore called the ministers of Christ. Finally, if the employment of the angels is to praise God, Priests have a similar office in the Church, for St. Gregory Nazianzen says: "the Priest praises God with the Archangels, and transmits sacrifices to the Altar on high." Let us, then, endeavour always to live like Angels in the midst of men, for this was God's design in anointing us Priests. St. Chrysostom says: "therefore God chooses us, in order that we may go about like Angels among men on earth."

3. *Who shall prepare Thy way before Thee.* Angels prepare the way for Christ in our hearts by persuading us to good, by praying

for us, by driving away the devil; but Priests do this in a more efficacious and more excellent way, for, as St. Bernard says, "your office is far more excellent, inasmuch as it is admirable not only in your eyes, but also in the eyes of the Angels." By the words of absolution, in one moment they introduce the Most Holy Trinity into the soul of the converted sinner; so that St. Chrysostom, considering this power of a Priest, declares "to them it is given to exercise a power which the Most High God has not willed to bestow even on the Archangels." Again, by our words we open the way for Christ to descend from heaven, and to hide Himself beneath the Eucharistic species, a power which has not been granted to the Angels, but to Priests alone. And while the Angels obey God, and are "mighty in strength, and execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders" (Ps. cii. 20), the Priest, in consecrating the sacred species, is obeyed by God Himself: "the Lord obeying the voice of a man" (Josue x. 14). Thus, a servant of God, who enjoyed the visible presence of his Angel guardian when he was ordained Priest by St. Francis of Sales, beheld the Angel no longer preceding, but following him, as though esteeming him more worthy of honour than himself. St. Francis of Assisi said, *that were he to meet an Angel and a Priest together, he should do reverence first to the Priest.* So St. Bonaventure tells us in the life of that saint. Nor is there reason to be astonished at this, for St. Gregory Nazianzen says: "the angels themselves venerate Priests." How great, then, ought to be our purity; let us, writes St. Chrysostom, consider ourselves as situated, as it were, in the very midst of the heavenly hosts, and so let us strive to be like them in holiness and in purity.

"I will sing praise to Thee in the sight of the Angels."—*Ps.* cxxxvii. 2.
"Lord, in Thy Angels Thou hast found wickedness."—*Job* iv. 18.

SATURDAY.

THE GREAT HONOUR IN WHICH PRIESTS SHOULD HOLD THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY.

I. BECAUSE THIS MYSTERY MERITS IT.
II. BECAUSE IT PLEASES MARY.
III. BECAUSE IT PROFITS OURSELVES.

"Of whom was born Jesus."—*St. Matt.* i. 16.

1. Priests should impress upon their people the duty of honouring that which is worthy of honour: "render therefore to all men their dues . . . honour to whom honour." How great honour is due to the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, "of whom was born Jesus"? Moses made the people keep the Dedication of the Tabernacle (Exod. xl. 19), and Mary is the Tabernacle sanctified by the Most High, as St. Athanasius calls her. Solomon celebrated the Dedication of the Temple with unheard-of pomp (3 Kings viii. 63), and the Virgin is called by Origen "the Honourable Temple;" by St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, "the Immaculate Temple into which the Spirit of God entered;" and by St. Epiphanius, "the Unpolluted Temple in which the Word of God dwelt." The dedication of the Altar was also solemnly honoured by all the people (2 Par. vii. 9); but the Conception of Mary merits far more honour, for she is called by St. Proclus "the Golden Altar of Holocaust," and by St. Germanus "the Altar of the Sacred Victim sanctified and dedicated to God." In short, everything that is holy, all that belongs to the glory of God, every marvel of His Almighty Power, is worthy of veneration. Now the Conception of the Blessed Virgin is called "holy" by the Church: "whoever *celebrates thy Holy* Conception;" the Virgin is called by St.

Bonaventure "the glory of the Lord, blessed from His holy place;" by St. Ephrem the "most excellent miracle of the whole world," and by St. John Damascene, "the miracle of miracles." Her Conception is a great work, for since Jesus was to be born of her, a habitation was to be prepared, not for man, but for God: "the work is great, for a house is prepared, not for man, but for God" (1 Par. xxix. 1); and for that end, St. Jerome says, God willed that it should be "immaculate, that is to say, without the slightest stain." Let us beseech God that He would manifest His omnipotence in us, by the great work of purifying our hearts and making us walk immaculate in the way of His commandments; for "blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord" (Ps. cxviii. 1). Let us realise this; he who would be blessed must be undefiled. So St. Augustine.

2. Without doubt this title is most pleasing to Blessed Mary, since it recalls the privilege which distinguishes her from all the children of Adam, who all sinned in him: "in whom all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). This privilege it is which makes her like unto her Son, who is "the Holy of Holies;" therefore is she called by St. Thomas of Villanova, "the adumbration of her Son's likeness." Moreover, St. Andrew of Crete calls her the "likeness drawn from the Divine Pattern who cannot sin." This privilege it is which makes her worthily occupy a position higher than that of the Angels, who, by a grace common to them all, never committed any sin, and therefore is she meetly called by St. Peter Damian, the "Queen who in the glory of heaven is the centre of angelic dignity," and the Church herself salutes her as "Queen of Angels." This privilege it is, in short, which heralded her future dignity, disposing her soul and body to be the worthy habitation of God, and making her, as St. Epiphanius says, "the Preparation of the Lord." Now if it becomes the Faithful to praise God on this day, in order to please their august Mother, it becomes Priests to set them the example as princes of the people: "Princes went before joined with singers" (Ps. lxvii. 26). Meanwhile let us remember that God would have us immaculate in offering the Sacrifice which through Mary was given to the world, and in executing the other offices of *our ministry*: "*W*hosoever hath a blemish, he shall not

offer bread to his God, neither shall he approach to minister to him" (Lev. xxi. 17).

3. The Blessed Virgin, from the first moment of her conception, was enriched with immense graces, to overcome every sin, and be worthy to conceive and bring forth Him who was free from all sin, and the Redeemer of all sinners, otherwise the shame of sin would have redounded, as St. Thomas says, to the Destroyer of sin, whereas an impetuous torrent of heavenly grace made glad this City of God: "the stream of the river maketh the City of God joyful" (Ps. xlv. 5). This grace was superior to the grace of all the Angels and Saints, so that where they had the term of grace, Mary had but its beginning: "the foundations thereof are in the holy mountains, the Lord loveth the gates of Sion, above all the tabernacles of Jacob" (Ps. lxxxvi. 1). Now in honouring this august mystery, the Faithful, and Priests especially, should draw from it important consequences. In the first place they must make war against the maxims of worldly men, who often glory in sin: "who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things" (Prov. ii. 14), and often also despise the inestimable treasure of grace which they have lost: "making little account of having sold his first birthright" (Gen. xxv. 34). In the second place, our hearts must be drawn to love and venerate Our Lady, who appeared in the world so beautiful and so beloved that she wounded even the Heart of God: "thou hast wounded My Heart, My Sister, My Spouse" (Cant. iv. 9), and we are well aware how fruitful in all good is devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Finally, by honouring the Conception of the Virgin, we obtain her patronage, for our Lady intercedes for all those who devoutly celebrate her holy Conception, as Holy Church herself tells us. And as we honour the first moment of *her* life with all our power, venerating it as immaculate, so will she speak a word for us to her Son, in order that in the last moment of *our* life we may be without spot in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, where none who are defiled can enter.

"The Lord hath kept thy coming in, may He keep through thee my going out."—*Ps.* cxx. 7.

"*Hail, woman clothed* with the sun."—*Apoc.* xii. 1.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

THE DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

I. WHAT THE PRIEST IS IN THE EYES OF THE FAITHFUL.
II. WHAT HE IS IN THE EYES OF UNBELIEVERS.
III. WHAT HE IS IN THE EYES OF GOD.

"The Jews sent from Jerusalem Priests and Levites to John, to ask him, Who art thou? . . . And they that were sent were of the Pharisees."—*St. John* i. 19, 24.

1. *The Jews sent.* The Jews desired to know who was this John who was sent by God, and who baptized and preached; and, says St. Augustine, they would not have been so curious to investigate if the authority he claimed had not excited them. Christians ought to realise the dignity of their Priests, when they consider their sublime authority, and ought therefore to honour them. St. Ephrem says: "We should all honour Priests." "Let christians then," says St. Bernard, "look upon the Clergy as a sacred and angelical order;" let them regard them as the special heritage of Christ, for, says St. Isidore, "the clergy have God Himself for their portion;" let them, with St. Prosper, esteem them as "the glory and crown of the Church," and, with St. Clement, consider them as the "legates of the Lord, petitioning in their name to God;" and, with St. Jerome, as "saviours of the world." Let christians acknowledge that the sacerdotal dignity is a stupendous miracle, an immense and infinite dignity—nay, as St. Dionysius scruples not to call it, a "divine dignity." Now have *we* this idea of it? do *we* reverence it in ourselves as it deserves? Know thy dignity, O Priest! and debase not thyself by actions unworthy of thy sacred character.

2. *And they that were sent were of the Pharisees.* Those who

questioned John were the enemies of God and of His Precursor, and, says St. Chrysostom, when they could not conquer him by flattery, they sought to degrade him by accusations. We have in face of us an incredulous, corrupt, and hypocritical world, which, if it cannot seduce us by its blandishments, will at least make us the objects of its calumny, in order to render us contemptible in the eyes of men. But, by so doing, the world unwittingly acknowledges our dignity; for, desiring to overthrow the Church, the world attacks us, whom it recognises as its defence and support. St. Leo calls the clergy "the Divine Army, the Lord's Camp," and elsewhere they are said to be "the Wall of the Church." The world is the enemy of the Faith, therefore it seeks to destroy the *Pillars of the Faith*, that is, Priests. St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Prosper say, Priests are "most firm pillars, founded in Christ, supporting the whole multitude of believers." The world desires to scatter the flock of Christ, and close against it the entrance to the heavenly fold, therefore it rages against those whom St. Ambrose calls the "Leaders and Rulers of Christ's Flock," against those whom St. Prosper speaks of as "Gates of the Eternal City, by which all who believe in Christ must enter to Christ." Let us then watch over ourselves, in order that all our actions may correspond to the dignity wherewith we are invested; let us imitate the Apostle who said, "I will honour my ministry" (Rom. xi. 13), for if we are not the first to respect the sacred character we bear, how can we expect that our enemies will respect it in us?

3. *Who art thou?* The Jews asked this question of John, not because they did not know who he was, but, as St. Chrysostom shows, to induce him to speak of himself with his own lips. Let us picture to ourselves that God asks of each one of us Priests: "Who art thou?" not because He is ignorant of the dignity wherewith He has adorned us, but because He would have us recognise what Priests are. Let us then, with St. Prosper, realise that He has constituted us "Stewards of His Royal House," and, with St. Peter Damian, "Co-operators with God, and Dispensers of His heavenly treasures." He has brought us into the Tabernacle of the Angels that we may be their "fellow-guests and fellow-servants," as the same St. Peter tells us; and St. Isidore says that, by

our Priesthood, we are "set midway between the divine and the human nature, inferior to the one, but superior to the other." According to St. Gregory Nazianzen He has conferred upon us the "greatest, most excellent ornament which man can have upon this earth;" and, according to St. Ignatius, the "height of all good." St. Chrysostom says, He has made every Priest "His Vicar, in the functions of the ministry." Let us thank Him all the days of our life for His great goodness, and especially when we offer to Him the Eucharistic sacrifice; and as often as we arise from sleep let us bless Him for having made us Catholics, for having chosen us from among His people, and exalted us by an eternal decree, and of His free grace alone, to be ministers of His holy religion: "I have exalted one chosen out of my people" (Ps. lxxxviii. 20).

"I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast upheld me."—*Ps.* xxix. 2.

"O Lord my God, Thou hast exalted my dwelling-place upon the earth."—*Eccles.* li. 13.

MONDAY.

THE HOLINESS REQUIRED IN A PRIEST BY REASON OF HIS DIGNITY.

I. BECAUSE HE REPRESENTS CHRIST.
II. BECAUSE HE HAS THE OFFICE OF ELIAS.
III. BECAUSE HE EXERCISES THE MINISTRY OF A PROPHET.

"And he confessed, and did not deny, and he confessed: I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he said: I am not. Art thou the prophet? and he answered: No."—*St. John* i. 20, 21.

1. *I am not the Christ.* The Evangelist points out to us the virtue of the Baptist by the emphatic, thrice repeated words, in which he declares his ingenuous and sincere confession: he clearly and steadfastly asserts that he is not the Christ: "I *am not the* Christ." We are the Christs of

the Lord, of whom it is said: "Touch ye not my anointed, and do no evil to my prophets" (Ps. civ. 15); and we are so called, not only because we are anointed, but because we are destined to represent Him in the operations of His love. St. Bernard says we are "vicars of the love of Christ." But how great sanctity is required for so august a representation! St. Ambrose tells us that it is a "great crime to have the name of Christ and not the actions of Christ; to enjoy so exalted an honour, and to lead an evil life; for the name should correspond with the actions—the actions should answer to the name." We ought, were it possible, to have a divine sanctity, since, in Holy Scripture, Priests are sometimes called by the name of Gods, as St. Gregory observes. Now, what efforts are we making to attain to the sanctity corresponding to our state? and yet we have continually sounding in our ears: "Be ye holy, because I," whom you represent upon earth, "am holy" (Levit. xix. 2). To acquire holiness we must curb our passions, we must mortify our interior and exterior senses, we must run in the way of God's commandments, and regulate all our actions by the rule of perfect charity. Are we doing so? "Sanctify yourselves, and be ye holy" (Levit. xx. 7).

2. *Art thou Elias? and he said, I am not.* St. John was called Elias by our Saviour (St. Matt. xviii. 12), because, as Elias will precede the second coming of the Messias, so did St. John precede His first coming; he went before Him in the spirit and power of that prophet (St. Luke i. 17); but, as St. Gregory says, he denied that he was Elias, because he was not Elias in person. We also ought to be Elias in spirit and power, and therefore St. Bernard requires that a Priest have the zeal of Elias, and we ought to prepare the way for His entrance into the hearts of men. Elias was distinguished for chastity, and, as St. Ambrose shows, was the first to raise the standard of this angelical virtue. Do we take due care to preserve that perfect chastity which we have sworn to observe in our body and in our soul? Elias had a zeal which was enlightened, prudent, active, ardent; without fear, without human respect, without worldly interest: "he was zealous for the Lord God of hosts" (3 Kings xix. 14), and we also are under *obligation* to be zealous for the glory of God. Elias worked

miracles in the order of nature; he nourished a poor family with a little bread and oil, he raised a dead child, he caused fire to come down from heaven to destroy the wicked. We ought to work miracles in the order of grace, when we nourish the Church with the Bread of Heaven and with the Oil of Grace, when we raise up sinners to the spiritual life, when we call down fire from heaven to consume wickedness out of the hearts of those who have erred. We ought ourselves, by our sanctity, to be burning and shining lights, and our words ought to be as torches to the people of Christ: "Elias the prophet stood up as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch" (Eccles. xlviii. 1). If we are not holy in so holy a ministry, we must not plead our weakness in excuse, but rather lay the blame on our evil will, for "Elias was a man passible like unto us" (St. James v. 17), and such excuses will not avail us at the tribunal of Christ our Judge.

3. *Art thou the prophet? and he answered: No.* Although John was a prophet, and more than a prophet, he was able to find a meaning in which this glorious title did not belong to him, and thus showed us how the truly humble man can find reasons for putting aside the praises which are given him. He was not a Prophet in the sense of prophets who foretold future events, because, as St. Augustine says, he pointed to the Saviour then present in the world. We Priests are also Prophets, because we speak of the Holy of holies, of His coming in the fulness of time, of His kingdom, and of His laws, like those who "foretold of the coming of the Just One" (Acts vii. 52). We dispose men for the second coming of the Messias, even as they laboured to dispose men for His first coming. Now, in Holy Scripture the title of holy is given to the Prophets: "He spoke by the mouth of His *holy* Prophets, who are from the beginning" (St. Luke i. 70); and we read in another place, "that you may be mindful of those words which I told you before, from the holy Prophets" (2 Peter iii. 2). In fact, Saint and Prophet have the same signification: "Thou spokest in a vision to Thy saints" (Ps. lxxxviii. 20); and how then can we excuse ourselves from being saints? Do we think that the Holy Fathers and the Councils are too severe in requiring sanctity in us? St. Augustine says the cleric must

make profession of two things—sanctity and the ecclesiastical estate; and therefore the Council of Trent impresses on Bishops that they require holiness in their clerics, even though they be placed in a lower grade than the Priesthood. The Council directs "that the Bishops admonish their clergy, in whatever order they may be, that in their life, conversation, and knowledge, they walk before the people of God mindful of what is written: Be ye holy because I am holy." Moreover they have learnt it from the Apostle, who wills that the Bishop and the Priest be "blameless, sober, prudent" (1 Tim. iii. 2). Let us place all our confidence in Jesus Christ, who is the fountain of all holiness; let us have recourse to Mary, who, by her powerful intercession, has obtained for so many Priests the gift of holiness; let us implore the help of our Guardian Angel and of our Patron Saints, in order that we may acquire the virtues proper to our state.

"With the holy, Thou wilt be holy; and with the innocent man Thou wilt be innocent."—*Ps.* xvii. 26.

"Sanctify us, O Lord, in Thy truth; Thy Word is Truth."—*St. John* xvii. 17.

TUESDAY.

HOLINESS CONTRIBUTES TO THE FRUIT OF PREACHING.

I. IT OBTAINS LIGHT FROM GOD.
II. IT CAUSES THE VOICE OF GOD TO BE HEARD.
III. IT MAKES STRAIGHT THE WAY OF GOD.

"They said therefore unto him: Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? what sayest thou of thyself? He said: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias."—*St. John* i. 22, 23.

1. *What sayest thou of thyself?* The ambassadors sent to St. John urged their questions with greater vehemence, as St. Chrysostom shows, in order to draw from his own mouth the opinion he had of himself. With greater justice might such a question be put to some preachers, who, without holiness of life, take upon themselves the ministry of the sacred word. "What sayest thou of thyself," whilst thou art instructing others in the Christian life? "I know his boasting, saith the Lord, and that the strength thereof is not according to it" (Jeremias xlviii. 30). Thy virtue corresponds not with thy boasting. How darest thou explain My commandments, if thou art among those who transgress them? "Why dost thou declare My justices, and take My covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hast hated discipline, and hast cast My words behind thee" (Ps. xlix. 16, 17). How can unhappy priests who deserve such grave reproof from Almighty God, receive the lights necessary to make their preaching efficacious? The Holy Fathers taught that the minister of the Word must first hear it spoken by God in his own heart, and afterwards utter it to the people by his lips; so

St. Gregory: and St. Augustine says he must first lift up his thirsty soul to God, in order that he may obtain life-giving wisdom, and then good words will break forth, and he will pour out the water wherewith his own heart is replenished. From St. Jerome we learn that God must be the master of the preacher, in order that the preacher may become the master of the people. Hence is it that preachers who were full of the Spirit of the Lord, who because of their holiness were enlightened by the Father of lights, wrought such marvellous conversions, while no such effects have been produced by others; for it is God Who animates the sacred orator, who enlightens him in his choice of arguments, Who assists him in adapting his words, his gestures, and his accents to his hearers, so that, as St. Augustine says, he may be understood, and listened to with avidity and profit—"gladly and obediently." What benefits have we lost, what benefits have our people lost through us, because in punishment of our want of dispositions, this heavenly light has been lacking to us.

2. *I am the voice.* St. John was called by Isaias the Voice which preceded the Word of the Father, precisely as the voice precedes the word, as St. Maximus observes. When we preach we also are "the Voice of God," and we convey His Word to the people. But what holiness is requisite in order to exercise this ministry with fruit! St. Chrysostom says that the preacher is chosen by God to be "both a lamp to shed abroad the light of truth, and a master to teach this truth to others; and that words would be unnecessary did the light of holiness shine forth in his life." Whence, as St. Ambrose observes, "it is just that he who by the grace of Order, which constitutes him the Voice of God, is esteemed greater than others, should also excel others in holiness of life." The Psalmist says the voice of the Lord makes itself heard in power, He will give to His voice the voice of power (Ps. lxvii. 34); and "shall give the word to them that preach good things with great power" (Ps. lxvii. 12). Therefore before we begin to preach let us examine ourselves, let us see whether we have, as we ought to have, all holy virtues. For St. *Jerome says that* he who is wanting in one virtue has none, and

St. Gregory shows the meaning of these weighty words to be, that one virtue without other virtues is either null or imperfect. This is a great truth, and grave matter for self-examination and humiliation.

3. *Make straight the way of the Lord.* Here is what all the Instructions, the Homilies, the Meditations which we give our people come to: "Make straight the way of the Lord." But to what holiness of life are *we* bound who say this! The Baptist said it, and could justly say it, for he was great in holiness before the Lord, and therefore was he meetly destined to convert the children of Israel, as the angel foretold to Zachary (St. Luke i. 15, 16). But, as St. Gregory says, "what presumption is it for one whose own face is covered with wounds which he cannot cure, to prescribe remedies to others;" and says St. Isidore, "with what countenance can we count our hearers, if they can turn upon us with this answer: 'First learn yourselves to live a holy life'?" Hence the Holy Fathers have always taught that as the master ought to be above the disciple, so the life of the Preacher ought to be far better than the lives even of the most virtuous of the Laity. For, as St. Jerome says, "what will be the edification of the disciple if he understands himself to be better than his master?" He should have so great virtue, as St. Chrysostom declares, as that he may, "like the sun, obscure the splendour of the stars"—that is, the holiest of the laity. If this is not the case, says St. Bernard, the Preacher becomes the "fable of his hearers," since he preaches to others that holiness which he himself does not possess. Are we in the measure of holiness becoming our state? Let us pray to Almighty God that as He has put His word in our mouths, He would put His holiness in our hearts. Let us weep bitterly for our sins, and let us resolve to look upon the exact observance of the divine law as our chiefest duty.

"O Lord, my portion, I have said, I would keep Thy law."—*Ps.* cxviii. 57.

"Therefore I reprehend myself, and do penance in dust and ashes."—*Job* xlii. 6.

WEDNESDAY.

TO ADMINISTER THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENTS WELL, PRIESTS MUST STRIVE TO HAVE THREE THINGS BEFORE THEIR EYES:

I. THE SANCTITY OF CHRIST.
II. THE ZEAL OF ELIAS.
III. THE INTEGRITY OF ELISEUS.

"Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the Prophet?"—*St. John* i. 25.

1. *Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ?* The Jews knew that the institution of Baptism pertained to the future Messias, for, as St. Thomas observes, the Prophet Ezechiel was speaking in the name of Christ when he promised: "I will pour upon you clean water," and St. Thomas goes on to explain, that since John, who had introduced the rite of Baptism, confessed that he was not the Messias, they wished to hinder him from baptizing. But this unjust pretension of the Pharisees, which was ill directed against John, is well directed against a Priest, who without holiness baptizes, and administers the other sacraments, of which Baptism is the Gate. If he be the Minister of Christ in conferring the sacraments, he ought to imitate Him, and become like Him in sanctity. St. Bernard says: "The Minister of the Lord should imitate the Lord, who Himself says: If any man will minister to Me, let him follow Me." He ought in all things to set Jesus Christ before him, as the most clear mirror and most perfect pattern of all sanctity, "in order," says St. Bonaventure, "that he may conform his own life to that of the Son of God." It is not a common work that he performs *when he dispenses* the divine treasures in the sacraments, but a

heavenly work; and he who would handle and administer the sacraments, must strive to attain to the height of virtue; no ordinary piety, holiness, and devotion suffices. Let us then clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ, whom St. Gregory Nazianzen calls "the great Vestment of Priests," in order that as we dispense His Blood, and apply His merits, so we may fittingly represent His person.

2. *Nor Elias.* If thou art not Elias, how darest thou baptize? For, says St. Thomas, it was meet that Elias, who divided the waters of Jordan, and crossing that river was carried up into heaven, should administer a rite of which that event was a figure. The fiery chariot in which Elias was carried up into heaven was a fit emblem of Him who had triumphed over earthly passions; not over barbarous nations, but over the pleasures of the world; for, says St. Ambrose, "far more terrible enemies are evil manners, than hosts of furious adversaries." Now, if the Priest does not gain this victory over the evil manners of the age, if he does not conquer his own passions, how can he approach the sacred mysteries, which, as St. Dionysius says, "demand a soul cleansed from all stain"? Most holy are those things which we touch with our hands, and which we dispense to the Faithful; and so, says St. Chrysostom, what hands ought not we to have? what ought not our tongues to be? For it may easily happen that he whose own passions are not mortified, should increase instead of cleansing the stains of others; and as he keeps his own soul foul with the mire of earth, so will he easily soil the souls of those who approach him, as St. Gregory says. And what shall we say further if passion should rule in the soul and make it guilty of mortal sin? Then would the Priest become guilty of sacrilege, and whilst seeking the salvation of others, he would become the minister of eternal damnation to himself. Let us ponder these truths seriously; let us examine the state of our passions, and let us not suffer them to make war in our members.

3. *Nor the Prophet.* St. Thomas explains that under the name "the Prophet" Eliseus is here meant; for in him also were typified the sacraments, *when he caused* Naaman the Syrian to wash seven

times in the waters of Jordan to cure him of his leprosy. Eliseus showed his disinterestedness in this miracle, for he exacted nothing; and, as we read in the fourth Book of Kings (v. 27), punished Giezi, who sought to make gain thereby. Hence St. Augustine recognises in Eliseus a type of Christ, who said to His Apostles, "Freely ye have received, freely give." And in truth the priest should consider that the sacraments are instituted to gain souls, not to gain money; and that no more precious acquisition can be made than the prize of souls. So St. Lawrence Justinian. We ought therefore to bewail those Priests who, stimulated by avarice, forget this important truth. The Councils loudly declaim against priests who, in administering the sacraments, are stained with simony, or give the least suspicion of avarice; the Council of London, 1237, recommends that they administer them purely and devoutly, without stain of cupidity. We should distinguish ourselves from physicians of the body, who ask for pay, and we should even avoid voluntary gifts; as St. Isidore counsels, we should accept no gifts for the benefits of the divine remedies. So will the administration of the sacraments give glory to God, procure the salvation of souls, and constitute a treasure of merits in the life eternal for ourselves.

"Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels."—*Ps.* l. 12.

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved."—*Jeremias* xvii. 14.

THURSDAY.

WE OUGHT TO HAVE JESUS CHRIST IN OUR MIDST IN THE FUNCTIONS OF OUR MINISTRY.

I. THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO PERFORM THEM WELL.
II. TO DISPOSE THE HEARTS OF OTHERS TO PROFIT BY THEM.
III. AND SO AS NOT TO USURP TO OURSELVES THE GLORY OF SUCCESS.

"John answered them saying: I baptize with water; but there hath stood One in the midst of you, Whom you know not."—*St. John* i. 26.

1. *I baptize with water.* So said the Baptist, desiring to make known the difference between his baptism and the baptism of Jesus Christ; as much as to say, as the Angelic Doctor explains, I, indeed, wash the body with a corporeal substance; but the Redeemer will save the body with water, and the soul with the Holy Ghost. In another sense we may say the same. When we exercise our sacred functions, all we carry to them on our side is water; for, as St. Bernard says, of ourselves we have no savour, the grace of devotion and the fervour of charity are wanting. St. Thomas says that water represents our misery in the want of these three things—justice, knowledge, and charity, and without these what will the sacred functions profit us? Instead of a treasure of merits we shall lay up for ourselves a treasure of divine wrath; for who but Jesus Christ can supply our failings, and make us "fit ministers of the New Testament" (2 Cor. iii. 6). Hence our eyes should be always turned to Him, in order to obtain the necessary aid for the right exercise of our ministry. Let us place our confidence in Him, for we are not sufficient of ourselves to do the least good, not even "*to think* anything as of ourselves, but our

sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). Let us always remember that without Him, as He Himself teaches us, we can "do nothing" (St. John xv. 5).

2. *There hath stood One in the midst of you.* Origen observes, that by these words, the Precursor pointed out the Divinity of Jesus Christ, Who as God is in all created things, and Who by preserving them is continually there. Again, he meant to say that Christ is in the midst of us—that is to say, in our hearts, disposing them according to His will. Therefore let us remember that it depends on Jesus Christ to dispose the hearts of men to listen to our words, to receive the sacraments profitably, to persevere, and to grow in grace. "Christ is all, and in all" (Col. iii. 2). Have you a penitent at your feet? Observe whether Jesus Christ dwells in him by His grace. Would you have such an one recover the spiritual life he has lost by sin? This life is Christ Himself. Would you have such an one preserve the spiritual life which he already possesses? Strive that he may be always clothed with Christ. Would you form a perfect christian? So act that Christ may be formed in him. Would you have him enriched with merits? Make him watch or sleep with Christ. Would you have him grow continually in virtue? Make him grow up in Christ in all things. In short, says St. Ambrose, in the Priest's eyes all things should appear "full of Christ." Let us place Him as the beginning and the end of our functions, and so will they be abundantly blessed.

3. *Whom you know not.* It was through malice that the Jews knew not Jesus Christ, and therefore their sin was without excuse. St. Thomas says they looked for Him in the future, and, through their blindness, knew Him not present among them. But far more deplorable is the condition of a priest, who does not acknowledge Jesus Christ although he believes Him present. He sees the fruit of his sacred functions, he sees grace communicated to the faithful, by means of which they become partakers of the Divine Nature, and he does not remember that the Eternal Father confers these precious gifts upon us by means of His Son, "*by whom He hath* given us most great and precious promises

that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4); thus does he usurp the glory due to Him, and to Him alone, for, as St. Ambrose says, "we have all things in Christ." Let us then lift up our eyes, illuminated by faith, and we shall see Him only, in the same way as did those three disciples who, "lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus" (St. Matt. xvii. 8). Let Him be always, says St. Augustine, before our eyes.

If these sentiments are not found in the breast of a priest, where Christ should dwell, where, asks St. Ambrose, will they be found? Let us examine ourselves carefully on this head; have we attributed to ourselves the glory of any success which may have attended our labours, then we are guilty of theft and robbery. If in our vainglorious boasting we have shown our vanity to others, we are guilty of scandal. Let us implore pardon for it, and grace to amend.

"My eyes are ever towards the Lord."—*Ps.* xxiv. 15.

"I to my Beloved, and His turning is towards me."—*Cant.* vii. 10.

FRIDAY.

PRIESTS SHOULD PREPARE THE FAITHFUL FOR THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST BY THE EXPLAINING OF THREE THINGS:

I. His birth in the Bosom of the Father.
II. His birth from the womb of His Mother.
III. His birth in the hearts of the Faithful.

"The same is He that shall come after me, Who is preferred before me; the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to loose. These things were done in Bethania beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing."—*St. John* i. 27, 28.

1. *Is preferred before me.* In these few words the Baptist showed the divinity of Jesus Christ; he means to say this: in dignity "He is before me," and in glory He infinitely surpasses me; being God, by His very existence, He is before me, says St. Cyril. We Priests, in imitation of John, should let slip no occasion of speaking in praise of Jesus Christ, of making Him known, of meditating on His Divinity. "He is the Only-begotten Son, who is in the Bosom of the Father" (St. John i. 18). As St. Cyril says, He is, and He was from all eternity, and ever consubstantial with the Father; sitting on the same throne, in equal glory, with the same power, with the same virtues, eternal, uncreated, subject to no change, ineffable, incomprehensible; the Splendour of the Father's glory, the Holy of holies, and the Lord of lords. What greater glory can a Priest have than to instruct the minds of men in the knowledge of the Divinity of Jesus Christ? asks St. Ambrose; and as St. Augustine exhorts, speak of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, so as, if possible, to ravish all men with His love. For this end make use of exhortation, influence, entreaty, dispute, argument, *so that all be done* with mildness and sweetness.

2. *That shall come after me.* Our Saviour was conceived six months after the conception of His Precursor, and He also began His public life after him, for, as St. Thomas explains, it was fitting that he who was imperfect should precede Him who was perfect. The benefit of the temporal birth of Jesus Christ reminds us of this, in which He, who from all eternity was begotten of a Father without a Mother, was born in the fulness of time of a mother without a father; and it is precisely this that should be the most frequent subject of the Priest's discourse during the holy days which precede the festival of our Lord's Nativity. Let us show, with St. Cyril, how He made Himself an infant that He might instruct us who are infants, and be the perfect master of infants. How can we ever often enough consider, as St. Bernard tells us, how He anticipated us, how He came to us, how He relieved us in our misery? He took the form of a servant that we may reign in heaven, He came an exile upon earth to lead us back to our heavenly country. He condescended to the meanest offices that He might set us over all His works. Let us meditate continually on this great favour which God has shown us, let us enkindle His holy love in our hearts, and so shall we speak of it to the Faithful at once to their profit and to our own.

3. *The latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to loose.* I am not worthy to loose the latchet of my Saviour's shoes, that is to say, I am not worthy to approach Him, to offer Him the meanest service, for, as St. Chrysostom says, there is no meaner office than to loosen the shoes of another. If John considered himself unworthy of such an honour as this, can we be worthy not only to approach Him, but to receive Him into ourselves? And yet He wills to be born in us, and we conceive Him when, corresponding with divine inspirations, we form the resolution to amend; and we bring Him forth when, aided by grace, we carry out this resolution. So St. Bernard. The Angelical Doctor, speaking of this birth, teaches that in souls which have received sanctifying grace, God not only dwells, as He does in all creatures, "by essence, power, and presence," but also in a special manner befitting a reasonable nature, in which God is said to be as the object which is known is in *him who knows it,* and as the object loved is in him

who loves it. The Eternal Word is then born in a heart, if He begins to be where formerly He was not; or if, being there, He begins to be there after a new manner, as the same St. Thomas says; and St. Augustine tells us, that then the Son is sent by His Father invisibly, bringing to the soul a fresh knowledge of divine things—a knowledge which is practical, and which carries with it a renewal of love effected by means of grace. Meanwhile let us ask ourselves if we are worthy to receive a God into the dwelling-place of our souls, as St. Gregory says; and let us diligently prepare ourselves for the worthy reception of so great a guest. Let us put away from us all that might displease His Divine Eyes, and let us confide in His Infinite Goodness, which longs to pour itself out upon us. Moreover let us use every effort that He may find the faithful well disposed for His spiritual birth within their hearts. Let us meditate on the nobility of our office, and its benefit alike to ourselves and to others.

"With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and He was attentive to me."—*Ps.* xxxix. 1.

"O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down, the mountains would melt away at Thy presence."—*Isa.* lxiv. 1.

SATURDAY.

MARY IN EXPECTATION OF HER DELIVERY.

I. Is the representative of the Church.
II. Is a figure of the Church.
III. Is Mistress of the Ministers of the Church.

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins."—*Matt.* i. 21.

1. *And she shall bring forth a son.* Mary ardently expected the hour of her delivery, and in this expectation represented the Church animated by the same desire. It is true that Mary was also, as St. Germanus calls her, the "Expectation of the World;" and as St. John Damascene says, the "Expectation of the Nations." But she herself expected the birth of the Messias more ardently than all the Patriarchs and Prophets. They sent up frequent sighs to heaven, in order that the "Desired of all Nations" might come, saying, "Which of us can go up to heaven to bring down to us the Eternal Word upon earth?" (Deut. xxx. 12). "Who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ down, and cause the Messias to be born upon earth?" (Rom. x. 6). But none of the Saints of the Old Covenant were animated with such love as animated Mary; none of them had the zeal with which Mary was inflamed for the salvation of the world. None of them could better understand or better appreciate the benefits of the Sacred Nativity, so as to desire it more ardently. "Thy eyes have made me flee away" (Cant. vi. 4); that is to say, as Cornelius à Lapide explains it, the eyes of this great Virgin ravished the Eternal Son, and caused Him to flee away from the Bosom of the Father into Hers." Then, having conceived her Son, she desired to behold His Divine Countenance, repeating with David her father, "Show us

Thy Face" (lxxix. 4). She, therefore, as representative of the whole Church, presented the vows of the Saints before the Eternal Throne; she comprised in herself the faith and fervour of the Old and the New Testament, for the Synagogue desired the temporal birth of the Messias, and the Catholic Church implores His spiritual birth in the hearts of her children. Let us pray to this august Mother to obtain for us be it but a spark of the divine fire which consumed her, in order to dispose our hearts and the hearts of others for the worthy celebration of the approaching Sacred Nativity.

2. *Thou shalt call His name Jesus.* In bringing forth the Saviour, Mary was a figure of the Church, through whom He is spiritually brought forth in the hearts of the Faithful, to their sanctification. In fact, the Church is the woman clothed with the sun, whom St. John saw, who "brought forth a man-child" (Apoc. xii. 5); but, says St. Bernard, the Blessed Virgin was also signified by the figure of this woman. The Man-child brought forth by the Virgin and brought forth by the Church is one and the same, says St. Ambrose, and He is Jesus Christ. St. Augustine says that the Virgin was a figure of the Church, for as she, in bringing forth her Son, remained a Virgin, so the Church, in all times, bringing forth the members of Christ, loses not her virginity; and St. Ambrose says further, that the Redeemer who issued from the womb of the Virgin, without injury to her virginal integrity, is the same who opens the immaculate fruitfulness of the Church to generate the nations. St. Augustine goes on to say, as the delivery of the one was without pain, so it is also with the other. Hence the sacred commentators understand the prophecy of Isaias, which expresses the great ease with which the man-child was brought forth, "before she was in labour, she brought forth . . . a man-child" (Is. lxvi. 7), as having reference both to the one Mother and to the other. Therefore, in her expectation of the divine Birth, Mary is a figure of the Church which expects to bring forth Christ in men, and men in Christ. Let us in these most holy days clothe ourselves with the ardent desires of Mary and of the Church, and let us beseech Almighty *God that, by the* ministry of His Priests, all men, "the fulness of

the whole world," may attain to the dignity of living members of Jesus Christ.

3. *For He shall save His people from their sins.* In uttering these words the Angel did not say "the people of Israel," but "His people"—that is, according to Venerable Bede, all people called to the unity of the Faith, and composed alike of circumcised and uncircumcised. The Ministers of the Church are designed for the formation of this people, and they should expect this birth, animated by Mary's sentiments, and following her example. Now, what did Mary during these days of her expectation? In the first place, she gave a great example of humility, concealing from all, and even from her troubled spouse, the mystery of her pregnancy, the gift of God, because, as St. Bonaventure says, she chose rather to be esteemed a sinner than to say anything of herself which might turn to her own praise. Let us learn hence that humility is the best disposition for a Priest who would bring forth many sons to the Church, and who, as St. Isidore says, would neither wound them nor illtreat them. In the second place, she gave a great example of obedience by executing the decree of Cæsar Augustus, who commanded the enrolling of the whole world, and who thus, as Venerable Bede observes, became without knowing it the organ of the divine purpose. Let us also learn to be obedient, for, as St. Dorotheus teaches, the obedient Priest will find that God obeys his prayers for the conversion of sinners. Finally, the Virgin expected her delivery with an ardent desire, praying that the Fairest among the sons of men, the Flower of Nazareth, the Author of salvation, should come forth to the light; her life, indeed, was a perpetual prayer, as says St. Ambrose. Let us imitate her by our prayers, so that many sons may be born to the Church through our ministry, and persevere in holiness and justice until they are brought forth in the heavenly country. So, as says St. Peter Damian, shall we have the fruitfulness of Leah with the beauty of Rachel. Let us then take Mary for our mistress, and so shall we have her for our Protectress in life and our Advocate in death.

"Now what is my hope? Is it not the Lord?"—*Ps.* xxxviii. 8.

"Lo, this is our God, *we have waited* for Him, and He will save us."—*Isa. xxv. 9.*

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

PRIESTS SHOULD CONSIDER, AND MAKE THE FAITHFUL CONSIDER, HOW PRECIOUS IS THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST. FOR—

I. He is Emperor of Emperors.
II. He is the Desired Victim.
III. He is the Eternal Priest.

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip his brother tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilina, under the high priests Annas and Caiphas."—*Luke* iii. 1, 2.

1. *The fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar.* The reign of Tiberius Cæsar is specified, who, as Origen observes, appeared at that time as lord of the whole world; and this indicated, says St. Gregory, that our Divine Lord, by the preaching of His Gospel everywhere, would be acknowledged King of the Nations. It is He, in fact, who, not only as God, but as man also, is constituted King of kings and Lord of lords, having "on His garment and on His thigh written King of kings and Lord of lords" (Apoc. xix. 16). How should the birth of this Emperor console us, for He comes to free us from a miserable slavery from which no other could set us free! "He shall deliver the poor from the mighty, and the needy that had no helper" (Ps. lxxi. 12). We were oppressed by every kind of injustice, we had lost peace, but at the birth of this Lord "justice shall spring up and abundance of peace" (Ps. lxxi. 7). However poor His subjects may be, He will take care to save them, and to redeem them from usury, and from all oppression. "He shall save the souls of the poor, He shall redeem their souls from *usuries* and iniquity" (Ps. lxxi. 13, 14). Meanwhile Priests

ought to prepare for the coming of this Emperor by preaching, for preparers of the way precede a great king when he is about to set forth on his progress. We are the heralds of this King, we ought to cry to the faithful, says St. Augustine, "Go forth to meet Him, prepare His way. Let us then fulfil this glorious office, let us prepare ourselves and others for the coming of the Emperor of Emperors, so shall we participate more abundantly in the graces which the Eternal Father dispenses at the birth of His Son; for when a son is born to a king, it is usual for him to grant favours to his subjects . . . when the Son of God is born He will give pardon to sinners."

2. *Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea.* These words remind us, that our Saviour was born to be sacrificed by this Roman governor, in testimony of the truth: "He gave testimony under Pontius Pilate" (1 Tim. vi. 13); they remind us again, that, from the beginning of the world, victims were offered to the Most High to appease His wrath, and that God Himself prescribed such rites to Moses, although afterwards by the Prophets He made as though He refused them; in fact, one of them says: "if Thou hadst desired sacrifice I would indeed have given it, with burnt-offerings Thou wilt not be delighted" (Ps. l. 18). But the Lord would show us by this, that One Victim alone could reconcile us with Him, and that all other victims had value only in so far as they were types of this one, and revived men's faith in and expectation of it. Therefore let us now comfort the Faithful by announcing to them that this Victim is come; in the estate of a victim He is found in a Virgin's womb; in the estate of a victim will He come forth in the stable of Bethlehem. Thus it is that Jesus Christ, "coming into the world," says to His Father: "Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not, but a Body Thou has fitted to Me" (Heb. x. 5). Thou hast made of Me "an Oblation, and a Sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness" (Eph. v. 2). Let us make known to all that "it is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sins should be taken away" (Heb. x. 4). How great then should be the gratitude of men towards a God who has made Himself a Victim for them! and *what should be* the gratitude of a Priest, who

presents this Victim daily before the Throne of the Father for his own sins and the sins of others, who, as St. Peter of Cluny says, offers the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, Who is sacrificed but does not die, Who is divided but not diminished, Who is eaten but not consumed.

3. *Under the high priests Annas and Caiphas.* St. Gregory observes that the time of the birth of the Messias is indicated, not only by the names of the sovereigns, but also by the names of the Priests, because He came not only to be our King, but, and especially, to be our High Priest. In fact, He was promised under the title of the Eternal Priest, "a Priest for ever" (Ps. cix. 4). He was prefigured by Melchisedech, and by all the priests of the Old Covenant, and therefore He was called "an High Priest of the good things to come" (Heb. ix. 4), and "a Great High Priest" (Heb. iv. 14). He perfectly fulfilled the office appointed Him by His Father, because a priest ought to be a mediator between God and men, and Christ is "the Mediator of God and men" (1 Tim. ii. 5); a priest ought to dispense divine gifts to the people, to offer the prayers of the people to God, and to satisfy for their sins, says St. Thomas. Now by Jesus Christ the Father "hath given us most great and precious promises" (2 Pet. i. 4), and by His prayers and merits we are reconciled to the Father Himself, whom it hath "well pleased through Him to reconcile all things to Himself" (Col. i. 19, 20). Therefore how precious and honourable for us is the Birth of this great Priest. How joyfully should priests solemnise it, who are assumed into His Priesthood, and with Him constitute One Priest. Meanwhile what zeal are we employing to secure a good reception for Him from His Faithful? Perchance through our negligence it may again come to pass, that He should "come unto his own, and his own receive him not" (St. John i. 11). Let us frequently meditate on this great mystery during these holy days, so that, inflamed by His holy love, we may enkindle the same love in the hearts of the Faithful.

"Give ear, O Thou that rulest Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep."—*Ps.* lxxix. 1.

"Behold, God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently and will not fear."—*Isaias xii. 2.*

MONDAY.

PRIESTS SHOULD SET FORTH THE GREATNESS OF THIS MYSTERY.

I. In its manifestation of the Divine Attributes.
II. In its fulfilment of the Ancient Prophecies.
III. From the manifold fruit which we derive from it.

"The word of the Lord was made unto John, the son of Zachary, in the desert."—*St. Luke* iii. 2.

1. *The word of the Lord was made unto John.* St. Chrysostom says that the word of God moved John to announce the Incarnation of the Word; and we Priests are also moved by the word of God to make known the mystery of the Incarnation, because, as St. Leo says, the authority wherefore we believe is divine, and the doctrine is divine which we follow. It is true that it is difficult to speak of it often and well, but, as the same St. Leo tells us, because of its very difficulty Priests are under obligation not to be silent regarding it. Moreover, as he also goes on to say, we ought rather to rejoice than afflict ourselves because we are ill fitted to speak of a mystery which shows our people the infinite mercy of God. Therefore in an age when ignorant and wicked men are saying that the Incarnation is unworthy of the Divine Majesty, let us show that the divine attributes were magnified by this great work. St. John Damascene says, the Goodness of God was shown in it, because He disdained not to take on Him the infirmity of His own creature. His Justice was shown in it, because man having been overcome by the tyrant, He would have him overcome by a Man, from whose hands he could not by violence snatch away the prey;

His Wisdom was shown in it, because He found the most fitting mode of paying the enormous price of our ransom; finally, His Omnipotence was shown in it, because there is no greater work than the Incarnation of a God. Let us therefore glorify God before His people, because He has visited them and wrought their redemption.

2. *The son of Zachary.* Zachary means "God remembers," and truly he who announces that God remembers His mercy—that He "is mindful of His mercy" (St. Luke i. 54)—announces that God, so to say, remembers "His Holy Testament, the oath which he swore to Abraham our father," to give Himself to us; announces the fulfilment of all the prophecies and of all the types of this great event, and which for four thousand years nourished the faith and expectation of the just; "as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets who are from the beginning" (St. Luke i. 70). As St. Augustine shows, the just believed in the *future* Incarnation, as we believe in the *past* Incarnation now that it has been accomplished. Therefore during these days let us recall to mind the prophecies concerning the time, place, manner, and effects of the coming of Jesus Christ. What rich matter for a Priest's meditation! How wonderful the Wisdom and Providence of God in the unity, distribution, and development of Revelation! How gladly will the Faithful hear that they are more fortunate than those who lived before the "fulness of time;" for now, says St. Leo, the shadows have fled away, the prophecies are fulfilled, the Law is abolished, and we are in the enjoyment of the Truth, of Revelation, and the Gospel.

3. *In the desert.* These words, observes St. Ambrose, remind us that the earth was a solitude and desert, but by the Incarnation it became fertile and bore fruit unto eternal life. And, indeed, what should we be without Jesus Christ? what would be our eternal destiny? what benefits has a God made man brought us? St. Augustine says that our faith has received this support, that a God, made man, has, with His own lips, spoken to man; our hope is now sustained by this knowledge, that God so ardently desired our salvation that He has gone so far as even *to take our nature;* our charity is enkindled by the excess of

love which Christ has shown us; the example of every virtue given us by a God who has lived amongst us, encourages us to run the way of our salvation. Our nature has been elevated to a participation of Divinity, and consequently to true beatitude: "God was made man," says St. Augustine, "that man may be made God." And from how many evils has Jesus Christ freed us! Through the Incarnation man has detested idolatry, and instead of adoring the devil, adores the true God; man has learnt to know the dignity of his nature, so as no longer to stain it with sin; man has found the remedy for pride and for all vices, and he has found it in the teaching and in the grace of the Saviour; finally, man is set free from the slavery of sin and the devil, so that he can enjoy the liberty of the sons of God. Let us then relate the mercies of the Lord in this wonderful and salutary work, but first of all let us nourish our own souls by meditation on truths, which are at once so consoling and so profitable for our sanctification.

"I will give praise to Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart: I will relate all Thy wonders."—*Ps.* ix. 2.

"Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient, from on high, hath visited us."—*St. Luke* i. 78.

TUESDAY.

THE PRECURSOR OF THE LORD TEACHES PRIESTS HOW THEY SHOULD CELEBRATE THE NOVENA OF CHRISTMAS.

I. THEY SHOULD STILL MORE DILIGENTLY SEEK OUT THE LOST SHEEP.

II. THEY SHOULD MORE FREQUENTLY PREACH THE WORD OF GOD.

III. THEY SHOULD ADMINISTER TO GREATER MULTITUDES THE BAPTISM OF PENANCE.

"And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance, for the remission of sins."—*St. Luke* i. 3.

1. *And he came into all the country about the Jordan.* The Precursor, being of the lineage of Aaron, had the right to exercise the priesthood of the ancient covenant, as the Law prescribed (Exod. xxviii.); but he, being called to announce a new Priesthood, and to instruct the first ministers of the New Testament, took no part in the Aaronic Liturgy, but gave to his disciples an example of chastity, of detachment, of the apostolic spirit, and of all the virtues which most become the Christian Priesthood. He went about all the country watered by the river Jordan to convert those who had gone astray, and, when converted, to baptize them. If we would prepare the way for the Divine Child in the hearts of the Faithful, we must not cease to frequent the places where our ministry may have fruit, nor should we be weary of more than ordinary labour during this holy Novena:

"I will rise, and will go about the city, in the streets and the broad ways" (Cant. iii. 2); and so shall we honour the Divine Word, who descended from heaven and "flew upon the wings of the winds" (Ps. xvii. 11). He came forth from the womb of the Virgin like a giant, desiring to run His most hard course of suffering in order to accomplish the great work of our Redemption: "He rejoiced as a giant to run the way" (Ps. xviii. 6). St. Gregory says, that for our Redemption, He made, as it were, leaps worthy of His strength and of His goodness: from heaven He came into the Virgin's womb, from her womb to the crib, from the crib to the cross, from the cross to the sepulchre, from the sepulchre He returned to heaven. If Christ did so much for the salvation of souls, shall we be weary of taking a few steps to co-operate with Him for the same object? If Christ has done so much for me, is it too much for me to suffer some little inconvenience for Him? If He has shown so much love for me in His Incarnation and in His Birth, it is but just, says St. Augustine, that I should show Him my love and my gratitude by more than ordinary labours in His service at this season of His sacred Nativity.

2. *Preaching.* The Church multiplies preaching during Advent; zealous pastors of souls and fervent priests are accustomed to preach with greater frequency and fervour during the Novena of Christmas, in order to instruct their people concerning this great mystery, and to dispose them for the better celebration of its anniversary. At this season preaching will be most useful to sinners, because they are invited to penance, and so to easy pardon. St. Leo, speaking of Christmas, says, "Let the sinner be glad because he is allured from sin." It will be most useful also to the just, because they will be the more inflamed with the love of God; for this is the "*time of lovers*" (Ezechiel xvi. 1). Each one should consider the benefits of Redemption, although bestowed upon all, as offered particularly to him, and, says St. Chrysostom, "should give no less thanks to Jesus Christ than if He had become incarnate for him alone." Fervent souls will easily grow in virtue through our preaching, considering, with the same St. Chrysostom, that in the Incarnation God has given us

what was most precious to Him, His Only-begotten Son. Let us not then fail to profit by these days, in which the Faithful are more disposed to listen to us, and we can have no better subject in order to their amendment of life than that suggested by the Festival. "Refrain not, O Priest, to speak in the time of salvation" (Eccl. iv. 28).

3. *The Baptism of Penance for the remission of sins.* The Baptism of John was called the "Baptism of Penance," because it excited to penance, and disposed to the remission of sins. So St. Chrysostom. Priests are the Ministers of the Sacrament of Penance, which may very properly be called the "Baptism of Penance," because it really effects "the remission of sins." In fact, Penance is fitly called by the Holy Fathers "a laborious Baptism," as the Council of Trent declares. 'Now as it was the will of our Saviour that the Precursor should prepare His way in the world by the administration of his baptism, so is it His will now, that Priests should prepare His way in the hearts of the Faithful by the administration of this laborious baptism; and this therefore should be our most assiduous occupation during the Novena of Christmas. So that the Faithful will not think of preparing dainty viands, sumptuous dresses, and splendid gifts, as though they were celebrating the birthday of Epicurus, rather than that of "the Man of Sorrows;" but they will think of taking the salutary medicine which is to cure their loathsome infirmities. Let us, says St. Bernard, administer this Sacrament to sinners in order to justify them, and to the just that they become more and more pure; and so will, observes St. Bonaventure, the Eternal Father bring forth His Son in the hearts of the just and of sinners. At this time people flock more readily to the Confessional, they are better disposed, and they receive greater abundance of grace from the Lord. St. Gregory, moreover, makes this reflection, that St. John not only preached the Baptism of Penance, but he also ministered it, and therefore, following his example, let us carry our people from the pulpit to penance, and in the Confessional let us be earnest in administering this sacrament. Let us be careful that through our slothfulness we lose not this precious *opportunity, which* is a great gift of God to ourselves and to

others. "Let not the part of a good gift overpass thee" (Eccl. xiv. 14).

"I will declare Thy name to my brethren: in the midst of the Church will I praise Thee."—*Ps.* xxi. 23.

"O Lord, strengthen the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees, behold Thou wilt come and wilt save us."—*Isa.* xxxv. 3, 4.

WEDNESDAY.

HE WHO IMITATES THE PREACHING OF THE PRECURSOR DISPOSES THE FAITHFUL FOR THE DUE OBSERVANCE OF THE APPROACHING SOLEMNITY.

I. BE A VOICE, CRYING IN THE DESERT.
II. STIR UP THE PEOPLE TO PENANCE.
III. TEACH THE FAITHFUL AMENDMENT OF LIFE.

"As it was written in the book of the sayings of Isaias the prophet: A voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths."—*St. Luke* iii. 4.

1. *The voice of one crying in the wilderness.* The Prophets were all lamps, preceding the coming of the True Light: "I have prepared a lamp for my Anointed;" John also was called a "light" (St. John v. 35), but it was his special prerogative to be called a "Voice." The reason of this is that it appertains to the "Voice" to manifest the presence of the Word, and, as Venerable Bede observes, he alone prophesied when the Incarnate was present. For the same reason, we, Priests of the New Covenant, are the Voice of Christ, for in the churches we speak in the real presence

of Him who is with us even to the consummation of the world. And therefore, as John spoke in order to prepare the way for Christ, so must we also prepare His way, because, says St. Bernard, Jesus Christ came once upon earth in visible shape, but now He comes invisibly and in spirit to save the soul of each one individually. Further, John "cried," because, as St. Thomas explains it, we cry out to the deaf, to those who are far off, and when ourselves moved to indignation. Such, according to many places of Holy Scripture, were the Jews, and they deserved to be thus treated. Such also are many Christians, who are wilfully "deaf," who wander "far away" from God, and who, by their sins, provoke His "indignation." If you would dispose men for the Sacred Nativity, cry aloud to them, and reprove them for the sins they have committed. "Cry, cease not, . . . shew my people their wicked doings" (Is. lviii. 1). And cry in the "wilderness," that is, after having withdrawn yourselves into "solitude," where God "will have spoken to your heart" (Osee ii. 14). For, as St. Augustine says, "he who was not a good Monk will not be a good Cleric;" unless you have first retired to meditate, your preaching will be useless.

2. *Prepare ye the way of the Lord.* How did John prepare the way of the Lord? He began his preaching by this exhortation, "Do penance" (St. Matt. iii. 2). He proclaimed Penance, because, as St. Hilary says, when a man returns from his wanderings into the right path, it is by penance that he finds God. This then should be the aim of him who seeks to bring forth Christ in the hearts of the Faithful: "to bewail past errors," as St. Gregory says, "and bewailing, not to commit them again." This was the aim with which St. Peter began his preaching, when he sought to make known Jesus Christ once crucified, and now sitting at the Right Hand of the Father: "Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts iii. 19). If we know not how to move our hearers to compunction, we shall be of the number of those false prophets, of whose preaching Jeremias said to Sion: "Thy prophets . . . . have not laid open thy iniquity, to excite thee to penance" *(Lam. ii. 14).* And how displeasing to God is the preaching that

is full of vanity and human respect! what injury will the hearers of such preaching receive, of whom it cannot be said that "they returned striking their breasts" (St. Luke xxiii. 48)! and how will God's curse light upon us! A sacred orator who was distinguished for his flowery eloquence, but who knew not how to bring forth fruits worthy of penance, when he lay on his deathbed was visited by a Capuchin Father, his rival in the art of eloquence. He found him in despair, dying without choosing to receive the sacraments, and exclaiming in the very presence of the Viaticum, "This is that God Whose holy word I have betrayed. By the just judgment of God I am damned." Thenceforth the friar, taking warning by this fatal example, changed his style and preached in a truly apostolic manner. Let us also take warning, and use all our efforts to excite our hearers to true repentance for their sins.

3. *Make straight His paths.* The Precursor was not content with exciting sorrow for past sins in the multitude, but he taught them also, how, by reforming their lives, they ought to walk in the right way, if they would know the Messias and profit by His redemption. That is the right path, says St. Thomas, which diverges not from the divine law, which is the rule of our actions. And it was precisely this divine law which John taught to the Pharisees, to the Sadducees, to the Publicans, to the soldiers, to the multitude generally, and to Herod, exhorting every class of men to the fulfilment of the duties of their particular state (St. Matt. iii. 7—12; St. Luke iii. 7—18). In Isaias yet more is found: "Make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God," which is as much as to say, that the very "wilderness" in which John preached, invited men to separate themselves from the corruption of the world, to hear God's law, and to seek their own salvation. So St. Jerome. Let us follow so good an example during this holy Novena, and let us be convinced that our hearers come to listen to God's Law from the Preacher's mouth, and not to listen to vain words; for the people "shall seek the law at his mouth" (Mal. ii. 7). In this way they will not only conceive the Word in their minds, that is, receive Jesus Christ, but they will also keep it; nay more, as Venerable Bede says, they will nourish

it with good works. Otherwise our preaching will be "vain" (1 Cor. xv. 14).

"I will teach the unjust Thy ways, and the wicked shall be converted to Thee."—*Ps.* l. 15.

"Convert us, O Lord, to Thee, and we shall be converted; renew our days from the beginning."—*Lam.* v. 21.

THURSDAY.

IN ORDER TO PREPARE THE FAITHFUL FOR THE SACRED NATIVITY, PRIESTS MUST REVIVE THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES IN THEIR OWN HEARTS.

I. THEY MUST RE-ANIMATE FAITH,
II. EXCITE HOPE,
III. AND ENKINDLE CHARITY.

"Every valley shall be filled; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain."—*St. Luke* iii. 5.

1. *Every mountain and hill shall be brought low.* St. Chrysostom says that the proud are signified by the word "mountain," and those whose pride is less may be called "hills;" for, as St. Basil says, the only difference between "mountains" and "hills" is in their size, in other respects they are the same. Pride is the greatest obstacle to believing in God, for it will not suffer the intellect to become the slave of Faith: "bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 5). Faith requires that all pride of soul should be brought low and humbled before the majesty of a God, who speaks and reveals *His mysteries,* in order to receive from us that sacrifice of the

understanding, which is first in order: "destroying . . every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. x. 5). Isaias foretold that this would happen, and it did really happen by the work of the first christian priests, who proclaimed the mystery of the Incarnation, "which had been hidden from ages and generations" (1 Col. i. 26); and then did the "mountains" melt like wax before the light of the Sun of Justice which had come upon the earth: "the mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth" (Ps. xcvi. 5). That is to say, personages eminent for birth, dignity, and talent will bow the head before the faith of Jesus Christ. We at this present time, speaking to those who are already Christians, have only to explain the mystery, to revive belief in it, to set forth its value, to develop its effects, and to impress them on the minds and hearts of our people, in order, as St. Leo says, that they may ever remember what the Head is, and what the Body is which belongs to it: that they may ever remember that by the work of their Incarnate King they have been freed from the power of darkness, and transferred into the light of God and the kingdom of God. Have we acted thus in the past? Are we resolved to act thus in the future?

2. *Every valley shall be filled.* What is the meaning of "valley"? It means, says Cornelius à Lapide, a man who is overmuch depressed and despondent; and like a "valley" is that soul in which is a fear which, as St. Thomas says, exceedingly depresses it. Therefore, in these days let us awaken in the hearts of the faithful a firm hope of pardon and eternal happiness. If they are sinners, let them listen to the Divine Child speaking to them even from His Mother's womb: "I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (St. Matt. ix. 13); for, says St. Chrysostom, so far is Christ from abhorring sinners, that, on the contrary, He came into the world for their sake alone. Let us say to them what St. Augustine said: "Breathe freely, O sinner, and despair not; hope in Him whom thou fearest, and take refuge with Him from whom thou fleest." True it is that preachers, like prudent physicians, must often give distasteful medicines; that is, they must often speak of the Child coming *as the* Judge; true it is that the same

Father has said that he was accustomed to affright his hearers by frequently speaking to them of the tremendous judgment; but now that the Lamb of God is born, who takes away the sins of the world; now that He is come to seek and to save that which was lost, let us rather stir up hope in our people, and exhort them to repeat these words of St. Ambrose: "O, Divine Jesus, *wilt Thou* abandon him, whom Thou hast loaded with so many benefits?"

3. *And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain.* In these words Charity is recommended; for crooked ways will be made straight, when man shall tend to God as to his Last End; for this is the way of the just: "the way of the just is right" (Isaias xxvi. 7). If injustice towards God has rendered our path crooked, and Charity has not been our rule of rectitude, now is the time when, as St. Gregory says, we should set ourselves straight; and what more powerful motive than the Incarnation can we have to enkindle our love towards God? So St. Bernard, Who would not strive to love so merciful a God, who was the first to love wicked and lost men? for, as St. Augustine says, "there is no greater attraction to love than being loved, and that soul is harder than it ought, which even if it were unwilling to bestow love, is also unwilling to repay it." Moreover the rough ways will be made plain when, as St. Gregory says, charity to our neighbour being again enkindled, the heart which was without meekness and easily transported by anger, will be freed from these vices. Let us show the Faithful the "*New Man*" just born, in order that they may "put off . . . the old man, . . . and put on the New" (Eph. iv. 22). Let them then "put on . . . the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience" (Col. iii. 12), and thus exciting our people to the practice of these virtues we shall succeed in preparing for the Divine Child a perfect people, after the example of the Baptist who was sent before Him for this end: "to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people" (St. Luke l. 17).

"And I said: Now have I begun; this is the change of the Right Hand of the Most High."—*Ps.* lxxvi. 11.

"O Lord God, . . . keep for ever this will of my heart."—1 *Paral.* *xxix. 18.*

FRIDAY.

IN PREPARING MEN FOR THE WORTHY RECEPTION OF JESUS CHRIST, PRIESTS EXHIBIT THREE QUALITIES OF THEIR MINISTRY.

I. ITS DIFFICULTY.
II. ITS SUBLIMITY.
III. ITS IMPORTANCE.

"And all flesh shall see the Salvation of God."—*St. Luke* iii. 6.

1. *All flesh.* Here, as in other places of Holy Scripture, man is called "flesh;" and this expression not only indicates man's weakness, all "flesh is grass," but also that man without grace is carnal, that by his sin he has plunged himself into the vices of the flesh, and that he has no other prudence save the prudence of the flesh: "My Spirit shall not remain in man for ever, because he is flesh" (Gen. vi. 3). This "flesh" is profitable for nothing; "flesh and blood cannot reveal the Son of God" (St. Matt. xvi. 17); "flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. xv. 50). And yet our Fathers in the Faith preached Jesus Christ to the most carnal men, that is, to the Gentiles; they preached Him also first to the Jews, great part of whom were living according to the flesh, and thus, as St. Cyril shows, the prophecy on which we are meditating began to be fulfilled. They proclaimed to unbelievers that the mouth of God had spoken to men: "all flesh together shall see that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken" (Isaias xl. 5). They overcame the immense difficulties which opposed the reformation of mankind, sustained by the arm of the Most High, and co-operating with the grace which illuminated their minds and *inflamed their hearts.* So that in spite of passion,

in spite of prejudice, men who were carnal became spiritual, and able to judge of spiritual things, so that the Apostle could say to them, "we speak unto you as unto spiritual" (1 Cor. ii. 13), and again, "you, who are spiritual" (Gal. vi. 1). We Priests ought to continue the work begun by them. Do we find unbelievers? We must convert them. Do we meet with Catholics of corrupt life, and abandoned to what the Apostle calls "the works of the flesh"? We must reform them. Immense is the difficulty, for it is easier to kill a man than to convert him, as St. Chrysostom says; but the arm of the Lord is not shortened, and therefore, strengthened by His grace, we can do what other zealous priests have done. In these holy days success is easy, for Jesus Christ is now born in the Flesh in order that we might be born in the Spirit. So the same St. Chrysostom.

2. *Shall see.* Here the sublimity of our ministry is indicated. Among material creatures nothing is more noble and more sublime than light, and the priest is the light: "you are the light of the world" (St. Matt. v. 14). He enlightens by his word, for "Thy word is a lamp to my feet" (Ps. cxviii. 105); he enlightens by his example, for he ought to be "light in the Lord" (Eph. v. 8); he enlightens by administering the sacraments, for it is written: "Come ye to him, and be enlightened" (Ps. xxx. 6); he enlightens by prayer, when he implores the Father of Lights to enlighten men's minds, and continually repeats: "May He cause the light of His Countenance to shine upon us" (Ps. lxvi. 2). And with what perfection did the first priests of Christendom effect this! By their means "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaias ix. 2). It concerns us to tread in their footsteps; it concerns us to purify hearts, seeing that if the heart be foul, a mist arises and obscures the understanding, and the fire of concupiscence hinders the sight of the sun: "fire hath fallen on them, and they shall not see the sun" (Ps. lvii. 9). "Blessed," on the contrary, "are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (St. Matt. v. 8). How sublime, then, is the office of Priests; to illuminate minds, and to purify hearts! But how great should be our knowledge of divine things, how great should be the purity of *our hearts, if we* are to succeed in this marvellous work! O my

God, illuminate first of all my mind, remove all impurities from my heart: "the Lord is God, and He hath shone upon us" (Ps. cxvii. 27). During this Novena do Thou show Thyself in the world as its true light, as its true life, Thou, who "shinest in darkness, and the darkness comprehends Thee not" (St. John i. 5). I adore Thee, and implore Thee to enlighten my darkness.

3. *The salvation of God.* St. Thomas says that the noblest and most important of all practical sciences is that which does not serve as a means to another science, but has a higher end. Hence Political science, which tends to the temporal happiness of nations, is nobler and more important than other practical sciences which are subservient to Politics. But the science which Priests profess and teach tends directly to eternal blessedness, without which temporal happiness is of no profit; therefore, says St. Thomas, it is nobler and more important than even Political science, and far nobler and more important than any other science. We, in fact, show to men "the salvation of God." This expression of Holy Scripture signifies "Salvation," and it also signifies "the Saviour;" it is interpreted according to the former meaning by St. Chrysostom, and according to the latter by St. Gregory. Upon us, the Ministers of God, is laid the charge of giving "knowledge of salvation to His people, unto the remission of their sins" (St. Luke i. 77); and, as St. Lawrence Justinian says, if we would honour God, we cannot do so better than by procuring the salvation of man. This is, says St. Prosper, the special office of Priests. If, on the other hand, by the "Salvation" of God we mean the Saviour, we ought to make men see Him in this present life by the light of Faith, that in the future life they may see Him by the light of Glory. How, indeed, would men have known the Name of Jesus Christ without Preachers? "How shall they believe Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a Preacher?" (Rom. x. 14). And how would they ever see God in heaven, if there were not Priests, who are continually saying, I seek not "that which is profitable to myself, but to many, that they may be saved" (1 Cor. x. 33). Let us then labour, during this holy season, that the Faithful may see the Godman who *is born their Saviour*, that they may receive Him

worthily and give Him supreme honour; in order that with a quiet conscience they may behold Him in that day when He shall come as their Judge. No business can be of so great importance as this.

"Shew us, O Lord, Thy mercy, and grant us Thy salvation."—*Ps.* lxxxiv. 8.

"Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, for salvation with Thy Christ."—*Hab.* iii. 13.

SATURDAY.

IN THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST MARY GIVES THREE VERY USEFUL LESSONS TO THE MINISTERS OF THE SANCTUARY.

I. ACCOMPLISHING THE DAYS OF HER CHILD-BEARING.
II. BRINGING FORTH THE SON OF GOD.
III. SHOWING HIM HER LOVE AND HER REVERENCE.

"Her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered, and she brought forth her firstborn Son; and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger."—*St. Luke* ii. 6, 7.

1. *Her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered.* Mary completed the period of her pregnancy, during which Jesus Christ, as perfect Man as well as God, had dwelt in a frightful prison: "Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb." Of His own choice had He remained full nine months as it were dead, without opening an eye, without moving a hand or a foot: "I am made free among the dead" (Ps. lxxxvii. 6); and yet, by David His father, He shows us that He did not leave this prison without regret, nor save by the express command of His Father who drew Him thence: "Thou art He that hast drawn Me out of the womb" (Ps. xxi. 10). And why was this? He was content with this abode because Mary entertained Him so well: "while the King was at His *repose, my spikenard* sent forth the odour thereof" (Cant. i. 11).

The virtues of the Blessed Virgin perfumed the Child with a most sweet odour, but it was her humility which especially pleased Him; humility, which, as St. Bernard says, exhaled its odour—that is, its accustomed odour—because God is accustomed to be pleased with humility. The Virgin declares that the Word made flesh made her womb His tabernacle: "He rested in my tabernacle" (Eccles. xxiv. 12). We Priests receive within us daily the same Son of God, the same Son of Mary; how do we entertain Him? Is He well pleased with our reception of Him? Does He go away satisfied when the sacred species are consumed? Humble thyself, beholding the condescension of a God, and, as says St. Anastasius, "acknowledge thyself a sinner; pour forth prayer to God with a contrite heart." If men expect gratitude and love on account of some slight benefit rendered them, how much greater right has Jesus Christ to expect it when He communicates Himself to us. Hence, concludes St. Chrysostom, "it is but just for men to offer thanksgiving."

2. *And she brought forth her first-born Son.* Mary brought forth her Divine Son as her first-born; that is, her only Son; for, as St. Jerome says, the only child must be the first-born; and she brought Him forth without detriment to her virginity: "behold a Virgin . . . shall bear a son" (Isa. vii. 14). As a word is conceived without corruption of the mind, so it issues from the heart without corruption; hence it was fitting that the Body of the Word should come forth without corruption from His Mother's womb. Besides, it was not fitting that He who came to heal what was corrupt, should corrupt what was sound; nor, says St. Thomas, was it fitting that He who commanded men to honour their parents, should, in His birth, diminish the honour of His Mother. We Priests bring forth Jesus Christ in the hearts of the Faithful, but do we remain uncorrupted when discharging this office of our Ministry? How many defects, how many grievous faults, it may be, are committed in administering the Sacrament of Penance! What ruin to him who enters on it rashly, who exercises it imprudently! St. Basil requires a confessor to be "an upright man," and goes on to point out all the virtues with *which he should* be adorned, in order that he may

not stain his own heart, nor himself lose the purity which he is restoring to others. St. Bonaventure demands knowledge in a confessor, that he may not render himself guilty of other men's perdition; and the Supreme Pontiff, Innocent III., would have him prudent, discreet, cautious, in order that he may question and direct his penitents well, without injuring himself or them. How can we attain this without the special protection of the Blessed Virgin? Let us ask the Mother to pray to her Divine Child for us; for, as St. Bernard says, the Son cannot reject His Mother, but will certainly grant her requests.

3. *And laid Him in a manger.* Mary profoundly adored the Child, embraced Him in her arms, pressed Him to her bosom, carried Him to the crib, and wrapped Him in poor but clean swaddling clothes. So did she show her affection, so did she second His great desire to be born in the extreme of poverty, humiliation, and suffering. The joy of the mother, as St. Bonaventure says, was immense, but immense also was her sorrow that she could not better entertain her Son. We also, when we bring forth Christ in the hearts of the Faithful, ought to have joy, like the Apostle, who said: "In this I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil. i. 18); but at the same time we should be sad, with a sorrow which is "according to God" (2 Cor. vii. 10), when we see sin have dominion in the world; when we see those who have been converted returning to their vomit; when we see venial sins abounding in ourselves and in others. Mary attentively considered the mystery of the manger, of the swaddling clothes, and of the animals which lay beside the Child; as Cornelius à Lapide says, she recognised in these objects an emblem of the world and an image of sins and of sinners. She made herself a Mediatrix with the Mediator in order to obtain for all sinners reconciliation with God. Let us also have recourse to this Mediatrix, that she may obtain for us freedom from the bonds of sins, and that from the condition of beasts we may pass to the condition of the sons of God; for, as St. Bernard says: "There is need of a mediator with that Mediator; and there is no mediator better than Mary."

"For the glory of Thy Name deliver us."—*Ps.* lxxviii. 9.

"*Rule Thou over* us and Thy Son."—*Judg.* viii. 22.

FESTIVAL OF THE NATIVITY.

THE SHEPHERDS, IN RECEIVING THE ANGEL'S TIDINGS, WERE A FIGURE OF WATCHFUL PRIESTS.

I. THEY WERE THE FIRST TO BE CALLED.
II. THEY WERE THE FIRST TO BE ENLIGHTENED.
III. THEY WERE THE FIRST TO BE COMFORTED.

"And there were in the same country, shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear: and the Angel said to them: Fear not."—*St. Luke* ii. 8, 9, 10.

1. *And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by them.* The shepherds who kept watch over their flocks by night, were a figure of Priests, who, as St. Ambrose says, in the night time of this present life sleep not, but watch in order to guard the souls committed to their care from the assaults of their spiritual enemies; and it was fitting, as St. Ambrose says further, "that *shepherds* should be found watching, and that they should be the first to receive the Heavenly Tidings, that He, the Good Shepherd, the Pattern of Shepherds, was born." Therefore all Priests who teach or direct souls, should remember that they especially are called upon to adore the new-born Child. Venerable Bede says, "Mystically speaking, they signify the pastors of the flock, teachers also, and rulers of faithful souls." Let us then be the first at the manger; let us contemplate this great mystery; let us be the first to attract the glance of the Divine Child, and let us melt into tears of tenderness, love, and compunction. He says to us: Come, make haste, and buy of Me without price,

at the expense of only asking, the wine of strength, and the milk of consolation: "Come, make haste, buy wine and milk . . . without any price" (Isa. lv. 1). "Come, eat My Flesh, and drink My Blood; this is your food, this is your drink, and therefore am I born in Bethlehem," that is, in "the House of Bread." "Come eat My bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you" (Prov. ix. 5). Come, you who are afflicted with misery, oppressed by the weight of your ministry. "Come to me all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (St. Matt. xi. 28). Let us go, then; "let us go over to Bethlehem," let us imitate the shepherds, who came with haste, and let us be the first to offer tribute to the new-born Monarch; for the princes of the people ought to go before the people in their acts of homage.

2. *And the brightness of God shone round about them.* The light which shone round about the shepherds is an image of the divine light with which worthy ministers of God are invested; and, as St. Gregory says, the greater their vigilance for the salvation of souls, the greater will be the light of grace which enlightens them; and the more solicitous they are for the welfare of their flocks, so much the more will they merit to understand divine truths better than others. God, who predestined us to the priesthood, Who enlightened us with His heavenly light from our earliest years, and gave us a clearer knowledge of His Son than He gave to the rest of the Faithful: "He hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus" (2 Cor. iv. 6). When we studied Dogmatic Theology, we learnt the treatise, *De Incarnatione*, in order that the sublime teaching of this great mystery might be impressed on our minds; we have often instructed the ignorant in it, we have confuted unbelievers, we have defended its truth. One step more remains for us to take, and it is this; to nourish our minds and hearts with the Faith and sound doctrine, by imploring the descent of the divine light into our souls, and so shall we be "good ministers of Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. iv. 6). Therefore let us hasten to adore the Divine Child; let us study Him, the pattern of humility, patience, and every virtue; let us say to Him, with St. Bernard: "The meaner Thou makest Thyself for

me, the dearer Thou art to me." Let Thy grace be made manifest in us, bestow on us abundance of light, for Thou hast "destroyed death, and brought to light life and incorruption by the gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10).

3. *Fear not.* The Angel took away all fear from the hearts of the shepherds; much more will Jesus Christ take away all fear from the hearts of His Priests. He says to them now from the manger, by His infant cries, what, on another occasion, He said in words: "It is I, fear ye not" (St. Matt. xiv. 27). I am Who am, and you are My ministers; whom should you fear? I am come, not to give you the spirit of fear, which was in the Old Law, but the spirit "of power, and of love, and of sobriety" (2 Tim. i. 7). Preach My Gospel without shame, without weariness, without diffidence: "be not ashamed of the testimony of Our Lord . . . but labour with the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. i. 8). Three times to-day you will offer the mighty Sacrifice which is the source of all strength, which, as Holy Church declares, was the support of the martyrs amidst their torments; three times to-day you will eat My Flesh and drink My Blood, so that in the strength of that food you may walk, even to "the Mount of God" (3 Kings xix. 8). And we will answer Him: Jesus, be Thou my strength: come to me, come to my soul, live in me; or, with St. Ambrose, we may say, For otherwise what would Thy coming into the world profit me?

"Say to my soul, I am thy Salvation."—*Ps.* xxxiv. 3.

"The Lord is my strength, and my praise, and He is become my salvation."—*Isa.* xii. 2.

FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN.

THE MEMORY OF ST. STEPHEN EXCITES US TO BEWAIL OUR SHORTCOMINGS IN OUR PAST LIVES AS ECCLESIASTICS.

I. SHORTCOMINGS IN PREPARATION FOR THE PRIESTHOOD.
II. IN THE STUDY OF SACRED LEARNING.
III. IN ACQUIRING THE ECCLESIASTICAL SPIRIT.

"And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." —*Acts* vi. 5.

1. *They chose Stephen.* God has given Bishops a model in the Apostles, and Priests in the Seventy-two disciples; He has given Deacons and Seminarists a model in St. Stephen, who was the first among the first deacons of Christianity. St. Augustine calls him first among the Deacons, as was St. Peter among the Apostles. He did not intrude himself into the ministry out of mere fancy, nor from motives of interest or vanity, but was *chosen*: "they chose Stephen." St. Peter Damian says that he was a young man of excellent disposition; it is certain that he was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost;" it is certain that God made his face appear "as if it had been the face of an angel" (Acts vi. 15). That is to say, so great was his angelic purity, and such the beauty of his mind, that, as St. Hilary says, God caused these hidden ornaments to shine forth in his countenance. Let us ask ourselves if we were guided to Holy Order simply by the signs of a heavenly vocation; if we remembered, as St. Cyril warns us, that it is foolish and wicked to enter on this estate without a vocation, and that "whom the Lord shall choose, they shall approach to Him" (Numbers xvi. 5). Let us ask ourselves *if we had the good* dispositions, the rectitude of intention, the

innocence of life, the approved chastity, the love of the sacred offices, which the Church requires, and which the Doctors of the Church continually inculcate; let us ask ourselves before God what profit we made of the time when we were seminarists and deacons, in preparing ourselves for the Priesthood. If we find ourselves guilty, let us ask pardon. As St. Augustine says, let us enter into our consciences and exact punishment of ourselves, humbling and bruising our hearts; and at all events let us now endeavour to acquire the holiness which then we had not. So shall we rightly exercise our sacred ministry.

2. *A man full of faith.* To be full of faith does not mean merely a perfect firmness of belief in revealed truths, nor an ardent love of revelation, nor a perfect conformity to the revealed will of God, but also, as St. Thomas declares, possession of the entire deposit of the Faith, and an explicit knowledge of all its details. Therefore St. Stephen was called by St. Jerome "a most learned scribe in the Law," and by St. Nicetus, "a doctor among doctors." Many enemies of the truth arose against him, "but they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke" (Acts vi. 10), and his discourse before the Council is a proof of his perfect knowledge of Holy Scripture. The proper time for us to learn revealed truths was the time when we were seminarists; then we should have attended to study; then we should have thoroughly furnished ourselves with ecclesiastical knowledge, that we might be well skilled and fitted for our sacred ministry; for, as St. Cyril says, Jesus Christ does not will to admit to the greater orders those who are not fit and meet therefor. Let us now call to mind in bitterness of soul the time we then lost, the useless or pernicious books we had in our hands, our little love for Dogmatic and Moral Theology, our negligence in acquainting ourselves with the Sacred Canons and Ecclesiastical History. How did St. Jerome weep over the vain and frivolous reading of his youth! At all events let us now endeavour to repair past shortcomings, let us throw aside such useless books as are unworthy of a priest, let us not leave off the study of such subjects as befit our state, and let us drive far from us what St. Isidore calls the "pest of ignorance."

3. *And of the Holy Ghost.* Stephen was already full of the Spirit of God, but, by the imposition of hands, a fresh abundance was added to him, so that he became "full of grace and fortitude" (Acts vi. 8). Animated by this vivifying fire, he collected and distributed alms, assisted at the Divine Mysteries, wrought miracles, and convinced unbelievers. Persecution arose against him precisely because of the freedom with which he spoke and worked in the power of this Spirit; and, because his persecutors could find nothing to reprove in his life, and could not answer his arguments, they loaded him with calumnies, as they had done his Divine Master; "treating the minister," says St. Augustine, "as they had treated the Master." His martyrdom, in which, forgetful of himself, he prayed for his enemies, manifested immense charity, which the Spirit of God had kindled within him, and won for the Church no less than a St. Paul; for, as St. Augustine says, "if the Martyr Stephen had not prayed, the Church would not now have had a Paul." We also in our time, as seminarists, should have acquired the Ecclesiastical Spirit; we ought then to have exercised ourselves in all works of virtue, in order to attain the perfection befitting the Teachers of the Faithful; we ought then to have preached, if not in words, at least by innocence of life; we ought to have instructed the ignorant, and practised the other works of mercy, frequented the Sacred Offices, and grown in Charity towards God and towards our neighbour. If we feel the stings of conscience for having failed in our duties, for having given scandal by dissipation, immodesty and idleness, and so proved by many signs our lack of the Ecclesiastical Spirit, let us now remedy the evil, let us endeavour to acquire, increase, and preserve this spirit in us. As St. Lawrence Justinian exhorts, let us at least have an ardent desire of spiritual increase, and let us implore the protection of the great proto-martyr, that he may obtain for us from God, pardon for the sins committed in our past ecclesiastical life, and grace to repair them in our Priesthood.

"I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord, and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin."—*Ps.* xxxi. 5.

"I will recount to Thee all my years, in the bitterness of my soul."—*Isa. xxxviii. 15.*

FEAST OF ST. JOHN.

THE MEMORY OF ST. JOHN TAKES AWAY FROM PRIESTS THE FEAR OF SHORTENING THEIR LIVES.

I. By Chastity.
II. By the Apostolate.
III. By Contemplation.

"So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee?"—*St. John* xxi. 22.

1. *So I will have him to remain.* By these words, or, to follow the Greek text, "if I will have him to remain," Jesus Christ indicated that St. John would not die a martyr, but that, as St. Jerome says, his "long life would take the place of martyrdom." Our Lord willed that he should remain in Judæa till the destruction of Jerusalem, to confirm the faithful, to convince heretics, to point out the fulfilment of prophecy; and, says St. Thomas, He willed that he should preach the Gospel in other parts of the world even to extreme old age. St. John was ever a virgin, and it was because of his virginity, says St. Jerome, that he was the best beloved of our Lord's disciples, and reclined upon the breast of Jesus. Because of this angelic virtue the Queen of Virgins was especially given to him for his Mother, and by this association, his virginity, says St. Peter Damian, received a fresh lustre. He died in extreme old age, and, as St. Lawrence Justinian tells us, laid himself down in the grave prepared for him in the church, when, as his flesh was without corruption, so his death was without pain; peacefully falling asleep, he departed to Christ. How is it then that impious physicians have written, and still go about saying that chastity *injures* the health and shortens life?

Is it not true, on the contrary, that continence preserves the health, and that the fire of concupiscence devours the flesh which nourishes it? "When thou shalt have spent thy flesh," says the Wise Man, speaking of this vice (Prov. v. 11). Let us, priests, specially guard against incontinence if we would not shorten our days. In us it would be a most grievous sin, and sin hastens death: "the sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. xv. 56). In us it would be sacrilege and impiety, and "the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Prov. x. 27).

2. *Till I come.* John will die, Jesus Christ means to say, "when I shall come," to render him the reward due to his labours, as St. Augustine explains it. So also He says in regard to good priests, for He is the Disposer of life and death, and has set them bounds which they cannot pass. Physicians often advise priests to abandon or, at least, to lessen their apostolic labours, alleging that they are beyond their health and strength. This assertion might be contradicted by the example of many Apostolic men, whose years have exceeded the ordinary lot of men, but the example of St. John suffices. He certainly did not spare himself, he was one of the pillars of the infant Church (Gal. ii. 9); he spent his strength in the labours of the Apostolate, and yet, as St. Thomas of Villanova says, God preserved him for the conduct of His Faithful even to extreme old age. Let us remember that it was of the unfruitful fig-tree that it was said: "Cut it down, therefore, why cumbereth it the ground?" (St. Luke xiii. 7); while if the priest is a fruitful tree, the Heavenly Father will say: "I will fill him with length of days" (Ps. xc. 16).

3. *What is it to thee.* What does it concern thee, Peter, to know my designs for this Disciple who has reclined on My Bosom, and has there nourished himself with the secrets of My Wisdom? What does it concern thee to know how I will make him an Eagle among the Evangelists, and among all contemplatives? A great part of St. John's life was passed in contemplation, especially while in the Isle of Patmos, and yet his life was a very long one. How then can irreligious physicians *threaten those* who give themselves to recollection, religious

exercises, and contemplation, with sickness and an early death? Let us answer them boldly: "Thy knowledge hath deceived thee" (Is. xlvii. 10). On the contrary, intemperance is hurtful, for it is written: "By surfeiting many have perished, but he that is temperate shall prolong life" (Eccl. xxxvii. 34); earthly sorrows, passions, vices, are hurtful, for "sadness hath killed many" (Eccl. xxx. 25); and "of sadness cometh death" (Eccl. xxxviii. 19); but to unite ourselves to the Author of life by prayer, to taste the Hidden Manna, and to converse with Heaven, preserves us from innumerable evils, and tends to prolong life: "Religiousness shall keep and justify the heart, it shall give joy and gladness" (Eccl. i. 18). Let us then pray to this Holy Apostle, asking him to obtain for us from God the spirit of prayer, the gift of chastity, and zeal for the salvation of souls; and since he was especially beloved by Jesus Christ, let us greatly love and honour him, for, as St. Peter Damian says, "it is meet that he who among men was especially beloved by Christ, should be especially beloved by those who love Christ."

"I shall not die, but live, and shall declare the works of the Lord."—*Ps.* cxvii. 17.

"St. John the Apostle, Cease not to cry to the Lord our God for us."—1 *Kings* vii. 8.

FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

THE MEMORY OF THESE MARTYRS TEACHES US THAT PERSECUTIONS SUFFERED BY THE PRIESTHOOD ARE PRECIOUS—

I. WHEN THEY ARE RAISED AGAINST THE INNOCENT.
II. WHEN THEY PROCEED FROM HATRED TO CHRIST.
III. WHEN THEY ARE BORNE IN DEFENCE OF CHRIST.

"Then Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the Wise Men, was exceeding angry, and sending, killed all the men children," &c.

1. *Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the Wise Men.* The Magi might appear culpable in the eyes of Herod for not having made known to him the abode of the Child, as he had enjoined them; but these children neither had committed, nor could have committed, any fault whatever; so that St. Augustine puts these words in the mouths of the mothers: "If it is a crime it is mine; if it is not, deliver us."

Herod therefore was unjustly enraged against them. In like manner, when persecutors have no just ground of complaint against Priests; when they are "innocent and upright" (Ps. xxiv. 21); when their imprudence has not excited persecution (for it often happens that "the tongue of the fool is his ruin," Eccl. v. 15), let them not grieve; the wrong rests with their enemies. Let them, on the contrary, rest in tranquillity of conscience, and say with the Apostle: "I rejoice in my sufferings" (Col. i. 24); let them remember that they have a share in the eighth Beatitude: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for *theirs is the Kingdom* of Heaven" (St. Matt. v. 10). St. Chry-

sostom, commenting on this passage, observes that our Saviour does not name the persons who persecute, but only the motive for persecution, "for justice' sake;" whether you are persecuted by idolaters, or by heretics, or by Christians whom you have perhaps corrected for their faults, if it is for justice' sake, your advantage is the same. Therefore consider not who persecutes you, but *why* you are persecuted. Let Priests remember that they are the ministers of Him Who said, "They have hated Me without cause" (St. John xv. 25); that many of their predecessors have sung with the Prophet, "Princes have persecuted Me without cause" (Ps. cxviii. 161); and that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12). Priests are more exposed to such persecution than other men, because they are "set up a wall for the House of Israel" (Ezechiel xiii. 5), which the enemies of the City assail. By Thy help, O my God, make me "a wall of iron" (Ezechiel iv. 3).

2. *He was exceeding angry.* The wrath and hatred of Herod were not, says St. Leo, directed against the children for their own sakes, but for the sake of the Messias, whom he sought to destroy in the cradle; and therefore they died martyrs, and are venerated as such by Holy Church. For which reason, observes St. Augustine, no honour shown them by the tyrant could have profited them so greatly as did his hatred. In like manner Priests are often objects of the hatred of unbelievers, because these men hate Christ and His Gospel, His Church and His Heavenly Father. He forewarned His Priests of this when He ordained them, saying, your enemies "have hated both Me and My Father" (St. John xv. 24); and remember that "if the world hate you, know you that it hath hated Me before you" (*ib.* 18); and it hates you precisely "because . . I have chosen you out of the world" (*ib.* 19); and as this hatred was the cause "that they have persecuted Me," so will it be the cause that "they will also persecute you" (*ib.* 20). Therefore let us arm ourselves with these forewarnings, let us fear the love of the world more than its hatred, and let us not flatter ourselves that the world can love the members whilst it hates the Head. As St. Augustine says, we ought, for the love of *Christ, to* endure the hatred of the world

along with our Head. Let us pray to God to give us patience and courage under the persecutions to which He shall see fit to subject us, and may all Priests who in any part of the world are now suffering the persecutions of the wicked, by His grace triumph over them; and we and they shall owe our eternal blessedness to those very persecutions.

3. *Killed all the men children.* The Innocents, by their death, saved the life of the Divine Child, for the tyrant, believing Him to be included in the general massacre, no longer sought Him. Moreover they proclaimed the name of the new-born King, "not by speaking, but by dying;" for, as St. Leo says, this atrocious act caused His birth to be made known even in the Capital of the World, where a foundation was thus laid for the promulgation of the Gospel. Priests are in like manner often persecuted for defending Christ; and here let us recollect that he who defends the truth, defends Christ, for He said: "I am . . . the Truth" (St. John xiv. 6). He who defends Wisdom, Justice, or any other Virtue, defends Christ, for He is Wisdom itself, Justice itself, Virtue itself. "He is made unto us of God, wisdom, and justice" (1 Cor. i. 30); "Christ the power of God" (1 Cor. i. 24); "He who defends the Church defends Christ, for He is the Head of the Church" (Eph. v. 23). Blessed, then, are we if in such a cause we suffer calumny, sarcasm, oppression, or even death. St. Ambrose tells us that there is nothing we should fear so much, that nothing is so dangerous before God, and contemptible before men, as silence when it is our duty to denounce sin.

"In God I have put my trust, I will not fear what flesh can do against me."—*Ps.* lv. 11.

"Thou deliverest them that wait for Thee, O Lord, and savest them out of the hands of the nations."—*Eccles.* li. 12.

THURSDAY.

WHAT SIGNS DISTINGUISH THE NATIVITY OF THE AUTHOR OF OUR PRIESTHOOD.

I. HE DOES NOT SPEAK.
II. HE IS WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES.
III. HE LIES IN A MANGER.

"And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."—*St. Luke* ii. 12.

1. *You shall find the Infant.* Would you, O Priests, whom the Shepherds represent—would you discern the Author of your Priesthood in His Birth, listen to the signs which the Angel gives. "You will find an Infant," that is, a Child who cannot speak a word, and yet He is the Incarnate Wisdom, Who came upon earth "to open the mouth of the dumb, and to make the tongues of infants eloquent" (Wisdom x. 21). That is, He is come to say to Priests, "I will open your mouth; I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which not all your adversaries combined shall be able to resist nor gainsay" (St. Luke xxi. 15). Wisdom is to teach Priests whose portion is the Word. Words supply their form to the Sacraments, offer public prayer to God, instruct the faithful, save the nations. "Receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (St. James i. 21). And to enrich his Priests with words, and that the Word might never fail in their mouth, He chose to impoverish Himself, and to appear as a speechless Infant. "That through His poverty you might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). St. Leo compares Him to a rich and merciful merchant, who would make a wonderful exchange, and trade with us to our exceeding profit; He took our goods and gave us His;

that is, He took our miseries and gave us His riches; He took our dumbness, and appeared unable to speak, in order to put powerful and efficacious words into our mouths, words of life and salvation. O my Jesus, by the merits of Thy sacred Infancy, put, I pray Thee, Thy words in my mouth, and grant "that what my voice utters Thy sanctification may confirm."

2. *Wrapped in swaddling clothes.* Jesus Christ came to clothe the nakedness of His Ministers, and by His Omnipotent Grace to clothe them with justice: "let Thy Priests, O Lord, be clothed with justice" (Ps. cxxxi. 9). Further, He had promised to clothe them with Himself, who is "Salvation" and the "Saviour": "I will clothe her Priests with salvation" (Ps. cxxxi. 16). This precious vestment is said to be "gilded clothing, surrounded with variety" (Ps. xliv. 10); and He would merit it for us by His humiliations and sufferings. He has chosen also to enrich the temples of the Church with magnificent ornaments for the splendour of the Divine worship, and to clothe His ministers in rich apparel, in order to render the sacred offices more imposing in the eyes of the faithful. He has willed that the blessings of His Heavenly Father should come down upon the sacerdotal vestments, so that they may be "purified, blessed, sanctified," as the Church prays when she blesses them. But how much did these prerogatives of our dignity cost Him! He not only emptied Himself, and came forth naked from His Mother's womb, but He also showed Himself before Heaven and earth "wrapped up in" poor "swaddling clothes." He who was "clothed with light as with a garment" (Ps. ciii. 2); He who, as St. Fulgentius says, was "precious as the stars," appears mean in these poor swaddling clothes. In like manner His Hands and Feet were bound, that our hands might be free to exercise our sacred ministry, and our feet ready to preach the Gospel of peace and good things. Venerable Bede says: "His Hands and Feet are tied, that our hands may be exercised in good works, and our feet directed in the way of peace."

3. *And laid Him in a manger.* The first Adam was placed by God in this world as a Priest in a Temple, that he might *continually* "offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and pay his vows to

the Most High" (Ps. xlix. 14). But, after the fall, man degraded himself to the condition of the brute beasts, and became like unto them, changing this temple into a stable: "He is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like them" (Ps. xlviii. 13). The Second Adam, in order to change this stable into a Temple, chose to be born in a stable. He chose to be laid in a manger, where the food of cattle was placed, in order that man, who had become like beasts, might, says St. Cyril, drawing near this Manger, find in it His Body for food instead of hay. Moreover, our Saviour would form in our hearts—in our hearts, reduced by sin to a more filthy condition than that of a stable—"the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. vi. 16). Again He would unite in one the whole Church to form "a spiritual house," whose stones should be built up of men, once unclean as beasts (1 Pet. ii. 5). He would have the world filled with temples dedicated to the true God, and He would have the magnificence of the fabrics, the ornaments, and the furniture such as to excite in men reverence and love towards God. To merit all this for them He willed to be deprived even of a cradle, and, as St. Chrysostom says, chose for His Mother one who, in her poverty, had nowhere to lay Him but in a manger. Therefore, O Priest! whenever you enter a Church and behold its magnificence, and find yourself honoured therein, remember the Manger of Jesus, which has procured you this honour and consolation. Consider how God has recompensed the humility, poverty, and patience of His Son; prize these virtues, endeavour to practise them, and so merit their reward.

"Blessed be my God, and let the God of my salvation be exalted."—*Ps.* xvii. 47.

"I will give glory to Thy Name, for Thou hast done wonderful things, Thy designs of old are faithful. Amen."—*Isa.* xxv. 1.

FRIDAY.

THE ANGELS SANG A HYMN WHICH WAS THE MODEL OF EVANGELICAL PREACHING.

I. IT WAS FITTING THAT THE ANGELS SHOULD GIVE THE MODEL OF THIS PREACHING.

II. THAT THEY SHOULD INDICATE ITS END.

III. THAT THEY SHOULD DECLARE ITS EFFECT.

"And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."—*St. Luke* ii. 13, 14.

1. *A multitude of the heavenly army.* The great Pontiff St. Leo declares that the hymn which the Angels sang to the Shepherds, who were a figure of Priests, was the model of Evangelical Preaching, for the instruction of Preachers. Before the coming of our Saviour, Angels were often sent by God to preach visibly; that is, to instruct, exhort, admonish, reprove men. Even the Law of Moses was given by means of Angels: "by the disposition of Angels" (Acts vii. 53); but when "the Angel of the Testament" (Malachias iii. 1), "the Angel of Great Counsel" (Isa. ix. 6), that is, Jesus Christ, appeared, Angels no longer appeared so frequently to preach; for He was sent by the Father for "a Leader and Master to the Gentiles" (Isa. lv. 4); and afterwards He Himself confided to Priests the ministry of the Word, saying to them, "Preach the Gospel" (St. Mark xvi. 15). But, as says the Venerable Bede, before the Angels brought their office to a close, they raised their voices to pay homage to Christ, and at the same time to instruct His Priests by their example. It remains now for the Angels to assist us when we are preaching, *sometimes even to* suggest words to us, and always to rejoice at

hearing the Gospel preached. So St. Francis Borgia. On this occasion, at the completion of their preaching and the commencement of ours, they sang a Hymn, which contains the substance, form, and model of Evangelical Preaching.

2. *Glory to God in the highest.* This is the end which every sacred orator should propose to himself—to glorify God, by proclaiming His faith, His law, His works, His mercies. He who in preaching has not this, but his own glory in view, corrupts God's word, says St. Lawrence Justinian, robs Him of His glory, and destroys his own soul. St. Chrysostom tells us that we should have no other intention, no other rule, no other end than this; and that holy Father adds, that we should not grieve if we are denied the praise of men, for the consciousness that we have sought no other glory than God's should afford us abundant consolation. How often does the Devil corrupt a good ministry, and render it evil, because this aim was wanting. But, above all, if our preaching is applauded, let us imitate the Angels, who, after announcing the good tidings to the Shepherds, broke out into a canticle of glory: and we also should give praise to God in heart and word and deed. If friends tell us that our preaching has borne fruit, says St. Francis Borgia, let us answer with the humble Virgin Mary, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." If we have not done this hitherto, let us repent, and endeavour to amend.

3. *And on earth peace to men of good will.* This is the purpose of our preaching; peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace one with another. Let us consider the value of this peace proclaimed by the Angels, and so excellently set forth by St. Leo: "Peace is that which begets the sons of God; she is the nurse of love and the mother of unity, the rest of the blessed, and the habitation of eternity, whose proper work and special blessing it is to unite to God those who are severed from the world." We should endeavour to procure this great boon for our hearers, and, as St. Prosper says, we should preach, not with the vain object of pleasing them, but with the charitable object of profiting them. Let us endeavour to amend their wills, for in proportion as the will is good, the peace which surpasses every sensible pleasure enters the heart, and without it there can be no happiness. Mean-

while let us carefully meditate on this Angelic Hymn, which the Church makes us sing so often in celebrating the Divine Mysteries, when the birth of Jesus Christ is renewed in our hands. Let us consider that the Church adds to it other expressions calculated to remind us of the four ends of the Sacrifice, to wit, adoration, thanksgiving, prayer, and the plea for mercy, which is repeated twice in order to implore pardon for sin, and remission of the punishment due to sin. Let us meditate well on this hymn, and accompany the Holy Sacrifice with these thoughts, and dedicate all our works to these great ends.

"I speak my works to the King."—*Ps.* xliv. 1.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."—*St. Luke* ii. 14.

SATURDAY.

OUR GREAT PRIESTESS TEACHES US TO PRESERVE THE DEPOSIT OF HEAVENLY DOCTRINE:

I. By the instruction of our neighbour.
II. By meditation in our heart.
III. By the sanctification of our heart.

"But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart."—*St. Luke* ii. 19.

1. *But Mary kept all these words.* Mary's keeping all these words is so important a record, that the Evangelist has repeated it (v. 51), for the Holy Spirit would call all our attention to it. Let us then consider that our great Priestess lost not the memory of a single word which she heard from Gabriel, or from Joseph, who was also instructed by an Angel, from Elizabeth, from Zachary, *or from the Shepherds.* Thus she ever merited more and more

the blessing promised to those "who hear the word of God and keep it" (St. Luke xi. 28). It was her intention to declare these things to those who were to perpetuate the memory of them, when the time appointed by God should arrive; and so in fact she did. Cornelius à Lapide tells us that she preserved them, so that she might declare and narrate them in her own time to the Apostles, and especially to St. Luke, who was about to write these things. It is, then, to this august Priestess, moved by the Holy Spirit with which she was filled, that we owe the profitable and consoling records of our Saviour's infancy, which she has given us by means of St. Luke. She preserved this living water within herself until the fitting season; then it became a fountain which burst forth, and gushed out in all places of the Church that believers might drink thereof. So did she fulfil the Scripture: "let thy fountains be conveyed abroad, and in the streets divide thy waters" (Prov. v. 16). She learnt these divine lessons with sincere affection and careful diligence, and communicated them with lavish liberality: "which I have learned without guile, and communicate without envy, and her riches I hide not" (Wisdom vii. 13). She could say with better reason than the Prophet Micheas: "As the Lord liveth, whatsoever the Lord shall say to me, that will I speak" (3 Kings xxii. 14). Let us imitate this priest-like conduct of Mary, by communicating to others the knowledge we have acquired, and the lights which God gives us; for of what use would all our labour and all our studies be to us, if we did not make them profitable for the edification of our neighbour? If we should hide the seed of the Divine Word, we should deserve not only the curse of God, but also of men: "he that hideth up corn shall be cursed among the people" (Prov. xi. 26). And why "cursed"? Because we should be condemned for the damnation of those souls, who, as St. Gregory says, have failed to amend through our silence.

2. *Pondering.* The Blessed Virgin not only retained these things in her memory, but made them the subject of her meditations. Thus she nourished her spirit with holy thoughts, and strengthened it more and more in the faith, deriving the arguments of faith *from angelic and human* testimony. As St. Ambrose

says, "she pondered the arguments of faith in her heart." She compared the things which she had seen with those which she had heard, and then, as Venerable Bede says, compared all with what she had read in the Oracles of the Prophets; weighed all, considered all, pondered all. Let us examine ourselves on this cardinal point of the priestly life. With what thoughts, with what reading, with what discourse do we nourish our spirit? Worldly thoughts, frivolous books, idle conversations, are called by St. Chrysostom the "husks" of the Prodigal Son, which cannot nourish or satisfy men, but are food only for swine. Why do we not rather read and meditate on the Holy Scriptures, which St. Augustine says are ornaments for the soul in health, and medicine for the sick soul? And St. Ephrem says that by reading the Sacred Pages the wandering mind recollects itself, and enters into itself, thus continually receiving consolation and profit. Let us pray to Almighty God for grace to relish such reading, and to profit by it.

3. *In her heart.* The Blessed Virgin meditated on the mysteries of the Incarnation with her heart rather than with her intellect. As St. Thomas avers, it often happens that the will inclines the understanding to meditate, and the understanding inclines the will to love. Now St. Jerome says that in Mary both understanding and will were full of grace, for the plenitude of grace was infused into her. Hence the reciprocal action of these two powers was in her most perfect; whilst the one meditated the other burned with heavenly fire. Even in us, says St. Bernard, the study of the Divine Mysteries should excite the love of God, not uselessly nourish curiosity; for, as he warns us, if theological knowledge is not digested by the fire of charity, it will breed evil humours, and injure instead of profiting us. During these days, on which we naturally speak to the Faithful of the Saviour's Birth, let us endeavour not only to proclaim these sublime truths with our lips, but also to impress them on our own hearts, as St. Bonaventure exhorts us, in order that we may love God more and more, Who has done so much for us. And do thou, O Great Priestess, who hast given so many precious instructions, and such *a perfect example* to Priests, do thou obtain for us the grace to

preserve like thee the pure deposit of the Faith, both in our minds and also in our hearts.

"Thy word is exceedingly refined, and Thy servant hath loved it."—*Ps.* cxviii. 140.

"From above He hath sent fire into my bones, and hath taught me."—*Lam.* i. 13.

JANUARY 1.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRIESTS AT THE CLOSE OF THE CIVIL YEAR.

I. HOW RAPIDLY IT HAS PASSED!
II. HOW HAVE WE SPENT IT?
III. HOW MANY BENEFITS GOD HAS CONFERRED UPON US DURING THE COURSE OF IT!

"After eight days were accomplished."—*St. Luke* ii. 21.

1. The Evangelist informs us in these words, that "eight days were already accomplished" of the mortal life of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a little while we shall hear that "all the days of His flesh" (Heb. v. 7) are accomplished; that "all things are accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man" (St. Luke xviii. 31); we shall hear Him say as He is expiring, "It is consummated" (St. John xix. 30). Truly all passes away; that alone passes not away which St. Peter calls "the day of eternity" (2 Pet. iii. 18). The days of this year have passed away for us; the thoughts which occupied us during the days of the past year have vanished: "My days have passed away, my thoughts are dissipated" (Job xvii. 11). How have they passed? More rapidly than a post: "my days have been swifter than a post" (Job ix. 25). It is worthy of note, that when the Holy Spirit is speaking *of the life* even of the High Priests, He makes

use of the expression "days" to indicate their brevity. Speaking of Jesus, the son of Josedech, he says that "in his days he built the house of the Lord" (Eccles. xlix. 14); and of Simon the High Priest, he says that "in his days he fortified the temple" (Eccles. l. 1). Speaking of other Priests, he says, "in the book of the days of his Priesthood" (1 Mac. xvi. 24). And these days are measured by a palm, that is, they are of short duration: "Thou hast made my days measurable" (in the Hebrew text "as an hand-breadth," Ps. xxxviii. 6); they fly like a shadow: "my days have declined like a shadow" (Ps. ci. 12). Let us fix these great truths in our minds, for they will make us set a higher value on eternity; let us meditate on the year that is past, and we shall meditate better on "the eternal years" (Ps. lxxvi. 6). Let us preach this doctrine to our people, that their eyes may be opened, so that for the sake of a few days' enjoyment they may not incur an eternity of torment, nor, for a few moments' freedom, merit an eternal prison-house.

2. The first eight days of the life of Jesus were accomplished, but how? In the fulness of infinite merits. In every moment He fulfilled perfectly the Will of His Father, and His Law "was in the midst of His Heart" (Ps. xxxix. 9). So that at the close of His mortal life, He could with truth say to His Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (St. John xvii. 4). He prayed, moreover, that His Priests might be perfected in union with Him: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (*ib.* 23). How have we perfected this union with Jesus Christ in the past year, by the fulfilment of the duties Almighty God has imposed upon us? Have we accomplished the work He has confided to us? How have we employed our days? How much time have we wasted—that time which, as St. Bernard tells us, was given us by God "to do penance, to obtain pardon, to acquire grace, to merit glory"? How much good can a Priest do in the course of a year! He may be useful as the sun, and do as much good as the sun does in a year's time: "as the sun when it shineth, so did he shine in the temple of God." How much glory may be given for eternity by leading a good life in the midst of his fellow-men! "*He obtained glory* in his conversation with the people" (*ib.* 5).

Alas! for us if we must repeat these words: "The days of my pilgrimage . . . are few and evil" (Gen. xlvii. 9). Let us pray to God that by means of penance, which redeems the time, He would restore to us all the days that we have lost, that is, the days that we have spent in the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and grant us to hear in our hearts the consoling words: "I will restore to you the years which the locust, and the bruchus, and the mildew have eaten" (Joel ii. 25). May He grant us grace to remember, that whilst our days are flying past, our works remain for all eternity! Every good work will be a merit in eternity; every defective work will be a diminution of merit in eternity; whilst every evil work, if not cancelled by penance, will be the cause of an eternity of torment. "For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap" (Gal. vi. 8).

3. Those eight days of the life of Jesus were employed, like all the rest of His life, in meriting for us the graces which we have had, or shall have. Moreover, in the form of a servant, He prayed for us unceasingly, to obtain for us the benefits which, in the past year, might have produced in us perfect holiness; for with far better reason than the Apostle He could say: "This also we pray for, your perfection" (2 Cor. xiii. 9). Through Him, we have obtained so many favours in the order both of nature and of grace; through Him, as St. Lawrence Justinian tells us, in the past year, there has been for us more abundant grace and a sublimer state. Let us then, with the Psalmist, turn into our own soul, and incite it to bless God for all the benefits of the past year. He has pardoned us so many sins: "Who forgiveth all thy iniquities;" He has cured so many of our spiritual and bodily infirmities: "Who healeth all thy diseases;" He has freed us from so many perils of temporal and eternal death: "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;" He has protected us with a special care, and has surrounded us, as it were, with a crown of His mercies: "Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion;" He has filled us with good things in body and soul, in order to satisfy our insatiable appetite: "Who satisfieth thy desire with good things;" He has restored our body and soul with fresh strength and supernal vigour, like an

eagle, giving us, with so many graces, the pledge of that which, with glory, shall "renew our youth like the eagle's." Let us, then, offer Him our thanks this day, for such thanksgiving is especially becoming priests; it is prescribed by justice and equity, and it is most profitable, opening the door for fresh mercies from God to us.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee."—*Ps.* cii. 2.

"The Lord is patient, and full of mercy, taking away iniquity and wickedness."—*Numb.* xiv. 18.

JANUARY 2.

WITH WHAT PRIESTS SHOULD FORTIFY THEMSELVES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR.

I. WITH A PATRONAGE TO STRENGTHEN THEM.
II. WITH A RULE TO FOLLOW.
III. WITH A PURPOSE TO DETERMINE THEM.

"After eight days were accomplished."—*St. Luke* ii. 21.

1. Jesus Christ accomplished these first eight days, and most certainly He might have spent the whole year, nay, all the years of His life, even to the last in which He had determined to accomplish our Redemption ("the year of my redemption is come," Isa. lxiii. 24) in perfect safety. He was incapable of sinning, and therefore could not fear to lose the spiritual life; He alone possessing the prerogative of a priest, "to be holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). We, on the contrary, have much to fear, both for body and for soul. Who knows if what Isaias calls "the consumption abridged" (x. 22) may not *be reserved* for us? Who knows if, whilst we are making plans

for the future, the sentence may not sound in our ears, "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee"? (St. Luke xii. 20.) We know not what will happen to us to-morrow: "you know not what shall be on the morrow" (St. James iv. 14). We know not what misfortunes or sickness, what perils, not only to health, but also to fame and fortune, we may meet with. Some day, perhaps, we shall have to say, "Evils without number have surrounded me" (Ps. xxxix. 13). How great risk do we run of losing God's grace by mortal sin, or of diminishing it by venial sins; our spiritual enemies besiege us on every side, "my enemies have surrounded my soul" (Ps. xvi. 9); and, without doubt, as St. Chrysostom warns us, more violent will be the temptations which assail us, the masters of the Christian people, than those which assail simple disciples. Hence the wise custom of placing ourselves each year under the protection of a particular Saint: "turn to some of the Saints" (Job v. 1). Turn to some Saint, honour him every day, engage him to protect thee; for, as St. Jerome says, the anger of God is appeased by the prayers of the Saints; and remember the words of the great St. Thomas: "The Saints, who pray for us, in asking anything by their prayers, are always heard."

2. Jesus Christ accomplished these first eight days, and by degrees the rest of His days, until His life was perfected by means of His passion: "for it became him . . . to perfect the Author of their salvation by His passion" (Heb. ii. 10). Thus perfected, "He became . . . the cause of eternal salvation" (Heb. v. 9) to all those who follow the Gospel; and we, His ministers, ought to set before our eyes those words of the Apostle, I must "consummate my course and the ministry of the word" (Acts xx. 24). To this end it is good to keep before our eyes, for our guidance, some maxim taken from Holy Scripture, or from the Fathers, which may stimulate us to perfect the good works we have begun; and thus, hiding the word of God in our hearts, we shall easily avoid sin, fortify ourselves against vice, and nourish ourselves in virtue. The Word of God, says the Council of Cologne, should be the priest's nourishment; and how many instances are there of benefits derived by the Saints from one

single maxim read or listened to. St. Anthony heard a maxim read in the holy Gospel, St. Francis Borgia had a maxim suggested to him by St. Ignatius, St. Andrew Avellino met with a maxim in Holy Scripture by chance; and all these, aided by grace, gave themselves to the study of perfection, and so became great Saints. In our congregation, it is customary at the beginning of the year to distribute slips of paper to the brethren, on each of which a maxim is written. Let us read it with reverence, as though it were dictated to us by God Himself, and let us imprint it on our hearts; perhaps grace may make use of this means to sanctify and save us. What will it avail me, O my God, to have the semblance of a perfect man, if Thy grace is wanting to me? "If one be perfect among the children of men, yet if Thy wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded" (Wis. ix. 6).

3. Jesus Christ accomplished these first eight days, as He spent His whole life, in holiness, and in justice. Thou, O my Jesus, being but a little Child, didst not appear perfected in virtue, and yet Thou wast truly so perfected; nay, Thou didst show forth to all men every virtue: "for Thou shewest Thy power, when men will not believe Thee to be absolute in power" (Wis. xii. 17). At the beginning of the year Thou showest to each one of us the virtue of which we have greatest need. The sacerdotal state requires all virtues, and that in so eminent a degree that they may shine forth in the face of the whole world. St. Gregory Nazianzen says that the virtue of an ecclesiastic should be such that it may concur with his teaching for the propagation of the Gospel. Let us at least practise one virtue, and perhaps it may bring others in its train. We shall have it suggested to us in our congregation, and let us not be content merely to read and repeat it, but make every effort to practise it; for, as St. Cyril says, it is no great thing to know virtue, but diligently to practise it is indeed a great thing. Moreover, let us endeavour to persevere in this practice, for St. Gregory says it is a lesser evil not to have entered on the right way, than, having so entered, to abandon it. Let us take heed that we are not of the number of those who, as St. Jerome says, "touch all virtues and afterwards leave all," *and let us implore* the help of Almighty God that we may know

what virtue is most necessary for us, and practise it both perfectly and perseveringly.

"Turn not away Thy Face from me: in the day when I am in trouble, incline Thine Ear to me."—*Ps.* ci. 2.

"Cast me not off from among Thy children: for I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid."—*Wisdom* ix. 4, 5.

JANUARY 3.

IN HIS CIRCUMCISION JESUS CHRIST EXHIBITS THREE TESTIMONIES OF HIS PRIESTHOOD.

I. As a Master of truth.
II. As the Expiator of our sins.
III. As the Sanctifier of souls.

"That the Child should be circumcised."—*St. Luke* ii. 21.

1. Jesus Christ was born, and appeared in the world, as He said of Himself, to "give testimony to the truth" (St. John xviii. 37); and in causing Himself to be circumcised, He began to give this testimony in the clearest manner, by manifesting Himself as the Supreme Truth. He showed that He had true human flesh, in order to confound the heretics of future ages, particularly the Manicheans, who attributed to Him a spectral body; the Apollinarians, who imagined His Body to be consubstantial with His Divinity; and the Valentinians, who believed it to be a body brought down from heaven. Moreover, it certified Him to be a true son of Abraham, who received the precept of circumcision as a sign of his faith in the future Messias. Thus, as St. Thomas says, did He confirm the promises made to the Holy Fathers. Finally He declared another most important truth, to wit, that we must observe the law, for this is the one way of

salvation; therefore, as Venerable Bede observes, He would be circumcised precisely on the eighth day, as the law prescribed. In this manner did it become our High Priest to appear as a Master of truth, and it becomes us, His Ministers, to be likewise masters of truth. For this end He has given us in our ordination the Paraclete, who is "the Spirit of Truth," and who "teaches all truth" (St. John xvi. 13). Let us then guard against lying, for lies in a priest's mouth would be shameful. How well did the Apostle fulfil his ministry, from whose lips issued the words: "I say the truth, I lie not" (1 Tim. ii. 7). Moreover, let us teach the truth to the faithful, for it will deliver them from all evil: "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (St. John viii. 32). Let us endeavour to make them walk in the way of truth, that is, in the way of justice, for with St. John, we can "have no greater grace than this," to hear that our "children walk in truth" (3 St. John v. 4), and so shall we and they behold and enjoy the Eternal Truth in Heaven.

2. Jesus Christ was to save His people by the remission of their sins: "For He shall save His people from their sins" (St. Matt. i. 21); but there could never have been such remission without shedding of blood: "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). Therefore in His Circumcision Jesus Christ shed His first blood, which was as it were the prelude and earnest of the rest, which was shed even to the last drop in His Passion. A holy writer calls it "the Prelude of His future Passion and Death," and St. Bernard says He showed therein His great haste to take our sorrows; He showed Himself ready to shed His Blood for us. This first blood-shedding was exceedingly painful, humiliating, and grievous to Him. It was exceedingly painful, because, unlike other children, He had the full use of reason, and He did not distract Himself from feeling the pain, but, on the contrary, engrossed Himself with it, in order to suffer all its bitterness. Moreover, as St. Thomas says, His Body, being the perfect work of the Holy Ghost, was especially sensitive and delicate. Then, again, it was exceedingly humiliating because, as St. Thomas again says, circumcision *was the* remedy for original sin, and therefore it was a mark of

shame, indicating the appearance of sinful flesh in the Holy of Holies. Finally, it was most grievous to Him, because it bound Him to the observance of the whole Law of Moses, which was a heavy yoke: "I testify again to every man circumcising himself, that he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. v. 3). He observed this Law exactly, and bore its yoke even to His Last Supper, in order to relieve His followers from it: "made under the law, that He might redeem them who were under the law" (Gal. iv. 5). Thus has He taught His Ministers to shrink from no sufferings, humiliations, or burdens whatsoever when the welfare of the Church is in question. Many, on this account, have offered themselves to God as victims for the people, and "in the time of wrath have made themselves means of reconciliation" (Eccles. xliv. 17). They have been severe to themselves, but to their people full of that charity which is "patient, is kind," which "beareth all things . . . endureth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 4, 7). Are we like these? Do we desire to imitate Jesus Christ? Let us love the little Child of Bethlehem circumcised for us, and so shall we feel ourselves moved to imitate Him.

3. The Holy Child was circumcised in order to operate in us a spiritual circumcision; that is, as St. Thomas says, He took upon Himself the figure in order to accomplish the reality in us. Further, Origen observes, that Christ being our Head, even as we died in His Death, and rose again in His Resurrection, so were we spiritually circumcised when the flesh of our Head was circumcised. Therefore the Apostle tells us: "In Him you are circumcised, with circumcision not made with hand in despoiling of the body of the flesh," but, by the mystery of the Circumcision operating spiritually in you, "in the Circumcision of Christ" (Col. ii. 11). A sign in the flesh was given to the Jews, who were a carnal people, but they often remained "uncircumcised in heart and ears" (Acts vii. 51). Christians, on the contrary, ought to experience a circumcision in the heart, in the putting off of the old generation, of the old man and his deeds, that is to say, of all that belongs to our sinful origin; and in this putting off, as St. Thomas says, sanctity consists. Let us then meditate how Jesus Christ by that painful wound, by the Blood which He then shed, wrought the salvation

of souls. Let us carefully examine our hearts that we may see whether they are circumcised, or whether passions are still alive in them impelling us to evil. Let us remember that the priests of Christ are the ministers of spiritual circumcision, as the priests of the line of Aaron were the ministers of carnal circumcision. Christ was circumcised by one of them, or by some Levite in the stable. Let us therefore endeavour to minister it to others, not only by word but by example, and let us pray to our Divine Lord, that, by the virtue of this His Most Precious Blood He would despoil us of the desires of the flesh, and make us live according to the Spirit.

"Turn away my reproach which I have apprehended, for Thy judgments are delightful."—*Ps.* cxviii. 39.

"Thou hast redeemed us to God in Thy Blood."—*Apoc.* v. 9.

JANUARY 4.

BEFORE WHOM PRIESTS SHOULD BEAR THE NAME OF JESUS.

I. BEFORE THE ETERNAL FATHER, TO IMPLORE HIS MERCY.
II. BEFORE MEN, TO PROCURE THE SALVATION OF THEIR SOULS.
III. BEFORE THE DEVILS, TO REPEL THEIR ASSAULTS.

"His name was called Jesus."—*St. Luke* ii. 21.

1. The name of the Holy Child "was called Jesus." What is the duty of priests in regard of this Sacred Name? When Jesus Christ would make known to Ananias the vocation of Saul to the priesthood, He uttered these words: "This man is to me a *vessel of* election, to carry my Name before the Gentiles" (Acts

ix. 15). This, then, is our vocation, to carry the Name of Jesus. First of all, we must present It to the Eternal Father, not only in the way from which none can be dispensed from presenting It, if they would obtain mercy, but also as the Ministers of public prayer, made in the name of the whole Church, in Holy Mass, in the Divine Office, and in all our other functions. We should remember that this Name is the title of the "Holy, Who dwelleth in the high and holy place" (Isa. lvii. 15), for It reacheth even to the "Ancient of days," who is "High, Terrible, a Great King" (Ps. xlvi. 3). The Father hears the Name of His Son, He is appeased, and bestows grace, showing Himself rich in mercy "unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. x. 12). Moreover, the Priest presents not alone the mere Name, but together with It the same Son in very truth and alive in his hands, and says, "Look on the Face of Thy Christ" (Ps. lxxxiii. 10); he presents It together with His Blood, to which His Name, was attached, for, as St. Bernard remarks, it was in His Circumcision that He was so called; he presents It together with His Passion and Death, of which Holy Mass is a continuation; and it is in reward of this Passion and Death that the Father has given so great glory to the Name of His Son: "He hath given Him a Name which is above all names" (Philip. ii. 9). Our confidence, therefore, cannot be deceived, first, because the love of the Father for His Son is infinite: "This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (St. Matt. xvii. 5); secondly, because it is the will of the Father that His Son should be glorified, and He Himself glorified in Him: "that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (St. John xiv. 13); thirdly, because the rights are infinite which the Son acquired on the Cross, and He by His justice merited every grace which is bestowed on us from Heaven: "He was heard for His reverence" (Heb. v. 7). We have a promise sworn to us, a promise by which the Son Himself assures us that the Father will grant us all things when He hears His Name: "Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you" (St. John xvi. 23). Our prayer is preceded and accompanied by the mediation of the same Son, Who on the throne of *His glory "is always living* to make intercession for us".

(Heb. vii. 25). Let us, then, conclude our prayers, pronouncing with the greatest confidence the words "Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

2. But it is not sufficient that the priest bear the Name of Jesus to the Throne of the Father, he must also bear It to men; and happy is the priest who has the vocation to bear that Name, as the Apostle bore It, "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts ix. 15)—that is, to heathen nations and in the face of persecutors. At least let us bear It to the faithful as do heralds, who promulgate the laws of their Prince; as did the prophets, who prophesied for God; as ambassadors, who offer peace by order of their Sovereign; as standard-bearers, who in battle bear the name and ensign of their Captain. Let us bear It that we may make known to men that He is the Beginning and the End of Faith, of Hope, and of Charity: "I am Alpha and Omega" (Apoc. i. 8). Let our sermons begin with Him and end in Him, in order that by means of Him, as Tertullian says, men may be recalled to their First Beginning—that is, that they may return to Paradise. Let us bear this august Name that It may be honoured by the good lives of Christians, and especially in this age, of which our Saviour might justly say, "My Name is continually blasphemed all the day long" (Isa. lii. 5). Finally, let us bear It in order to wash the souls of sinners from their iniquities. Hence we may say to them exultingly with the Apostle: "You are washed . . . you are sanctified . . . you are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. vi. 11); for, "there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12).

3. We must make use of the efficacy of this Name, while leading the Christian army, that we may obtain the victory over our spiritual enemies. St. Justinian observes, that demons depart from the bodies of the possessed at utterance of this Name, and it is certain that our Divine Lord promised this: "In My Name they shall cast out devils" (St. Mark xvi. 17). Hence in this Name the Church exorcises and casts out evil spirits; in this *Name She triumphs* over the gates of Hell. We, as Her Ministers,

ought to breathe with Her Spirit when we utter It, and especially in the solemn administration of Baptism, in the blessing of inanimate creatures, and in the liberation of the possessed, for, "in the Name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. ii. 10). Let us employ the power of this Name, which signifies, as St. Augustine says, the whole economy of the Incarnation and Redemption, in order to destroy the works of the Devil; and, as St. Bernard tells us, should the Devil have excited anger, pride, or any other passion in us, all his machinations will be dissipated by invoking the Name of Jesus. Let us therefore make good resolutions on this head, and let us pray to our Divine Lord to give us the fear and love of His Most Holy Name.

"For the glory of Thy Name, O Lord, deliver us, and forgive us our sins for Thy Name's sake."—*Ps.* lxxviii. 9.

"I will praise Thy Name continually, and will praise it with thanksgiving."—*Eccles.* li. 15.

JANUARY 5.

HOW THE PRIEST SHOULD BEAR THE NAME OF JESUS.

I. IN HIS HEART.
II. ON HIS LIPS.
III. IN HIS ACTS.

"Which was called by the Angel, before He was conceived in the womb."—*St. Luke* ii. 2.

1. The Name of Jesus was "called by the Angel." This Name was called, not imposed, because, as St. Bernard observes, it had been decreed from all eternity. No other than an Angel was chosen to bear It to *Joseph* and to Mary, in order that Priests,

who are likewise destined to bear It, should take Angels for their pattern — Angels, whose name and likeness they bear, but to whom they are superior in their ministry. Therefore they should burn with love for Jesus, and show themselves "flames," as it is written of the Angels: "His ministers a flame of fire" (Heb. i. 7). Cornelius à Lapide says that St. Paul bore this Name in his heart with a burning love; and so must the Ministers of the Word bear It when they preach Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; for, as St. Augustine remarks, if they do not themselves burn, they cannot inflame their hearers. Better than others do we know the infinite perfections for which Jesus merits the highest love—merits to be loved infinitely; merits love, and not a light love, says St. Jerome, but a love ardent and strong. Better than others we know His benefits, more than others we participate in them, and in an especial manner we acknowledge ourselves purchased by Him, and made His own, so that with St. Anselm we should say: "Thou hast given Thy whole self for me; Thou hast purchased for Thyself my soul; Thou hast purchased for Thyself my body; both are Thy slaves." Let us therefore excite all our affections, let us enkindle in ourselves this holy love, and let our hearts be altars on which may ever burn this Divine flame. Thus let us bear the Name of Jesus, otherwise, however useful we may be to others, we shall be useless to ourselves; nay, we may draw down upon ourselves that tremendous anathema uttered by the Apostle: "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" (1 Cor. xvi. 22).

2. The Apostle "carried the name of the Saviour" in his mouth also, speaking of It, as Cornelius à Lapide says, with an efficacious eloquence. So did he show himself an Angel in the flesh, for when Angels appeared in the Old Testament, when they gave the Law, and when they instructed the Prophets, they had no other end than Jesus Christ: "for the end of the law is Christ" (Rom. x. 4); and how worthy of all praise is that Priest, who, imitating the Apostle, remembering that he is "the Angel of the Lord of Hosts," ever bears this Name in his mouth, drawing thence, as says St. Bernard, light and nourishment and medicine. What light does not this Name shed

abroad when preached! What spiritual nourishment do not the faithful derive when thoughts of Jesus are excited within them How powerful a remedy do we not pour into their wounds when we apply the omnipotent and life-giving Name of the Saviour! How great merit does not the Priest gain who does "all things in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. iii. 17). Meanwhile let us remember that we need the Holy Spirit in order to utter this Name worthily: "no man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3); and, as St. Augustine says, no one can say It in the Holy Ghost, if he do not love It.

3. Finally, let us bear this Name in our actions, like the Angels who labour in order to serve Him, and who, in the days of His flesh, served as His ministers: "and the angels ministered to him" (St. Mark i. 13). St. Paul, as His true minister, bore Christ's Name in his acts, by his laborious life, and by his continuous and grievous sufferings. Let us consider how the Name of Jesus was given to many personages of the Old Testament in a figure, and that in the New Testament It is given to Priests by representation. St. Jerome calls them the "saviours of the World," and they are, as Peter of Blois says, "coadjutors of the Redeemer." Therefore ought we to carry in ourselves the image of this Heavenly Adam, and so present ourselves before both God and men: "as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the Heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 49). How monstrous to see a Priest leading the life of a sinner, who, at the Altar, in the Confessional, in the Pulpit, represents the Just One! What an offence to the Blessed Trinity! What do the Angels say of it? what does the world say of it? what do the very devils say of it? for we are a continual spectacle to them: "we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Cor. iv. 9). So it is, says St. Bernard; we are a spectacle to angels and men, both bad and good. What is our dignity if we are unworthy of it? It is not save an ornament in the mire. Let us ponder this well; let us lament our past errors, and amend.

"All they that love Thy Name shall glory in Thee."—*Ps.* v. 12.

"Thy Name *and Thy remembrance* are the desire of the soul."—Isa. xxvi. 8.

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

THE MAGI WERE A FIGURE OF CHRISTIAN PRIESTS.

I. BECAUSE THEY WERE THE FIRST TO RECEIVE THE FAITH.
II. BECAUSE THEY WERE MOST COURAGEOUS IN PROPAGATING IT.
III. BECAUSE THEY WERE MOST DOCILE IN FOLLOWING IT.

"There came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him."—*St. Matt.* ii. 1, 2.

1. *There came wise men from the East to Jerusalem.* The Magi were the first-fruits of the nations, because they were the first from among them to recognise the Messias. Rabanus says that, according to the common opinion, they were at once sages and princes; and so we may regard them as a figure of Priests, who are not only better instructed in matters of religion than the laity, but are also Princes of the Christian people. They should therefore be the first in the Faith, not by priority of time, for all receive the habit of Faith in Holy Baptism, but by their fuller possession and better use of it. St. Ambrose writes that the Priest should have nothing in common with the multitude, and therefore his Faith should excel theirs; and indeed it is precisely in Faith that he ought to be a pattern to the Faithful: "Be thou an example to the Faithful . . . in faith" (1 Tim. iv. 12). Let us therefore strive ever to increase in this virtue, and to be pre-eminent in it above the people. Without the increase of Faith we can never attain the perfection proper to our state; it is, says St. Chrysostom, the "origin of justice, the crown of sanctity, the beginning of devotion, the foundation of religion." Wouldst thou have the spirit of prayer? Remember, says St. *Augustine, that Faith* is the source of prayer. Wouldst thou

become truly rich, truly honourable? Thou canst nowhere find greater riches, treasures, honours, or seek them better, than through Faith. Let us then consider in what manner we exercise this virtue, and what efforts we are making to increase and perfect it.

2. *Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews?* Let us admire the courage of the Magi, who, as Cornelius à Lapide says, without fearing the wrath of Herod and his courtiers, sought in the royal city for another king, asking where the new King of the Jews was born. Moreover, on returning to their own country they gave themselves to the preaching of the true religion, and by their preaching merited the crown of martyrdom. It belongs to Priests to preach the true Faith, because, as St. Cyril says, they are the masters of Faith, the guardians of the true Faith. The true Priest is one who, as St. Ambrose describes him, does not waver like a child, nor allow himself to be carried about by every wind of doctrine, but stands perfect in Christ, rooted in the Faith. Moreover, John of Antioch tells us, that to excel in Faith, and to teach it to the people, should be the chief office and primary aim of the Priesthood. In fact, this is, as St. Chrysostom shows, the greatest and most salutary remedy that we can apply to the wounds of those souls whose salvation we seek.

3. *For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him.* Many in the East saw this star, and remembered the prophecy of Balaam (Numbers xxiv. 17), and knew this phenomenon to be extraordinary and mysterious; but few followed the star. All Jerusalem was moved at hearing of its appearance, and at sight of the Magi who had followed it; but none of the Jews stirred. The Priests themselves pointed out the place, proclaimed God's word, and manifested the mystery; but they did not profit by all this. As St. Augustine remarks, the Doctors spoke and remained where they were, whilst the Magi, after they had heard them, went to seek the Child. If Priests would follow that Faith which they preach to others, and from which others derive so great profit, they would not live as many, alas! do live; they would live as pilgrims in this world, without attaching themselves to earthly *goods, without* losing sight of the good things of

heaven. Let us then reflect on the obligation we are under to make our life conformable to the Faith, and not to have a faith without works, which is but a dead faith; but endeavour, as St. Ambrose exhorts us, to be patterns to the people both in faith and in works. O Priest, man of God, strive to be among the first to "pursue justice, godliness, faith" (1 Tim. vi. 11).

"I have believed, therefore have I spoken."—*Ps.* cxv. 1.
"Increase our faith."—*St. Luke* xvii. 5.

THE EPIPHANY.—II.

GOOD PRIESTS SHOULD CELEBRATE THIS FESTIVAL WITH THE GREATEST FERVOUR.

I. BECAUSE THEY WELL KNOW THE TRUTH OF THE FAITH.
II. BECAUSE THEY MEDITATE ON THE TREASURES OF THE FAITH.
III. BECAUSE THEY OWE THEIR DIGNITY TO THE FAITH.

"And behold the star which they had seen in the East, went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."—*St. Matt.* ii. 9, 10.

1. *The star which the Magi saw in the East.* The Holy Fathers regarded the star as a figure of faith. St. Augustine says: "The light of Faith is given us for a leader like the stars of heaven." And St. Bernard preached that as the Magi recognised the Son of God hidden in a stable, by means of a star, so do we recognise Him by Faith; for Faith is a bright light, and makes those lynx-eyed who receive it. But brighter is this faith in Priests, for they know, better than others, Who has revealed it, to whom He has revealed it, and how great are the truths which He has revealed. St. Cyril considered Priests as placed upon the summit of a high mountain, whence they might better observe and behold the beauties of dogma, and speak of them boldly. *Better than others* we should recognise Faith to be that precious

treasure with which the Divine Mysteries—God Himself—is purchased. St. Ambrose says: "Faith secures the divine mysteries. . . . Money does not buy Christ, but Grace; thy reward is thy Faith." They well know that this virtue is a supernatural and free gift of God, and that simply by the operation of the Divine mercy we have been called "out of darkness, into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. ii. 9). Let us glance at infidel nations; let us call to mind our idolatrous forefathers, and let us say with the Prophet: "He hath not done in like manner to every nation, and His judgments He hath not made manifest to them" (Ps. cxlvii. 20). Meanwhile let us fear lest the abundance of our knowledge become a cause to us of heavier punishment; for, as St. Francis Borgia warns us, the greater our knowledge of God, the greater punishment will the careless use of it entail upon us.

2. *The star . . . went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was.* Behold the immense benefit of the Faith: to lead us to Christ; to make us know Him; to guide us to hope in Him; to supply motives for loving Him; to show us the obligation of imitating Him; to open the way to possess Him and enjoy Him through all eternity. Without Faith we were a people walking in darkness, who afterwards, by it, saw great light: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isa. ix. 2). We were not the people of God, eternal mercy was not for us; now we are His people, His inheritance, the sheep of His pasture, the possessors of His mercies: "Who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet. ii. 10). Now who, better than a Priest, can appreciate these great benefits? Who better than he can understand that Faith, as St. Bernard says, is, as it were, a model of eternity, which in its boundless bosom comprehends the past, the present, and the future? We are bound to make known the benefits of the Faith to the people, in order, says St. Cyril, to confirm in it those whom Jesus Christ has purchased with His own blood, and made His true worshippers. What a misfortune would it be for us to become intoxicated with the good things of this world, to walk uncertainly in the way of the Lord, without practical knowledge of

our duties, without thinking that God sees all things, without fear of His judgments! And yet many Priests are thus wretched. "The Priest and the Prophet have been ignorant through drunkenness, they are swallowed up with wine, they have gone astray in drunkenness, they have not known Him that seeth, they have been ignorant of judgment" (Isa. xxviii. 7).

3. *And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.* How great should be the spiritual consolation of a Priest when he meditates on his vocation to the Faith. Better than others he tastes the fruits of Faith, he owes his dignity to the Faith. The Faith after having placed him among Christians, and made him an ecclesiastic, has consecrated him a Priest. By Faith the people reverence us, even to regarding us as their Princes, as the Crown of the Church, as the Tree of Knowledge in the midst of the Paradise of God. If we have acquired any merit before God, should we have done so without the Faith? For St. Augustine calls the Faith the sure foundation of all virtues. What should we have been had we been born among infidels? Probably we should have been ministers of a false religion, and hence "blind, and leaders of the blind" (St. Matt. xv. 14). We might have had the key of knowledge, and ourselves "not entered in, and those that were entering in have hindered" (St. Luke xi. 52). Out of fanaticism, impiety, and deceits, we might have done as much harm to ourselves and others, as we can now do good, if with an ardent zeal we propagate the one true Religion. As now the Holy Spirit makes use of our natural gifts for the operations of grace in the exercise of zeal, so, perchance, the Devil might have made use of our natural activity, rendering us zealous in the cause of a false religion, and persecutors of the true, as was the case with the Apostle, who "beyond measure . . . persecuted the Church of God . . . being more abundantly zealous for the traditions of the fathers" (Gal. i. 13, 14). Therefore let us celebrate this festival with great fervour, and let us stir up our people to celebrate it worthily.

"I will sing to the Lord who giveth me good things, yea, I will sing to the Lord, the Most High."—*Ps.* xii. 6.

"He is my God, and I will glorify Him; the God of my fathers, and I will *exalt Him."—Exod.* xv. 2.

THE EPIPHANY.—III.

MARY, IN THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI, IS A PATTERN OF ZEAL.

I. By what she saw.
II. By what she did.
III. For what she prevents.

"And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His mother." —*St. Matt.* ii. 11.

1. *The Magi found the Child with His Mother.* They had profited by the star until the moment that "it stood over where the Child was;" then it disappeared, for a Living Star was to complete their enlightenment. Mary, whose name signifies "Star of the sea," and who, as St. Bernard expresses it, was necessarily raised above the great and wide sea of the world—Mary is charged to make known Jesus Christ to the Magi, to present Him for their adoration, to give Him to their embraces, to accept their gifts in His Name, and to instruct them concerning this Divine Mystery. St. Bonaventure says that when the Blessed Virgin heard the tumultuous noise of many people, she snatched up her Divine Son Jesus in her arms. The Magi entered and prostrated themselves to adore Him, then, remaining still on their bended knees before Him, they began to discourse with His Holy Mother, and to ask questions concerning the Child. The Blessed Virgin relates all to them, and they readily and cordially believe all that she tells them. Mark with what graceful majesty, mingled with becoming modesty, she returns with eyes cast down the necessary replies, neither forward to talk nor desirous to be seen. But God, on this great occasion, gave her more than usual resolution to support her dignity, because the Magi personated the whole Church,

which her Child was afterwards to establish among the nations. Then did Mary exercise her zeal with entire perfection; then did she give a noble example to Priests, especially to those who catechize the rude, or instruct the unbelieving. For then she performed the function of Mistress of the future Church; Mistress, as St. Thomas of Villanova calls her, of all the Apostles and disciples, and likewise of the Church. Hence, in instructing the Magi, she is, as St. Augustine says, to be regarded as Mistress of the Nations. Therefore, when we are preparing ourselves for preaching the Gospel, let us implore light from her, saluting her with the title given her by Richard of St. Lawrence, "Mistress of the Preachers of the Gospel."

2. The Magi had not, like the Shepherds, received "a sign" from an Angel to enable them to recognise the Messias, but "they found the Child with Mary His Mother," and she showed Him to them. Let us meditate carefully on this august mystery. The Gentiles easily showed their gods, as they had visible forms, and then asked those who adored the true God, "Where is thy God?" (Ps. xli. 4). It belonged to Mary to clothe the True God with flesh, thus to render Him visible, and then to show Him to the Nations in the person of the Magi, in order that they might see and adore Him, and enter on their vocation to the Faith. "All the nations Thou hast made, shall come, and adore before Thee, O Lord" (Ps. lxxxv. 9). David prayed that God would show Redemption, and the Redeemer: "Shew us, O Lord, Thy mercy, and grant us Thy Salvation" (Ps. lxxxiv. 8). Solomon likewise said: "Shew them the good way wherein they should walk" (3 Kings viii. 36). And this way was Christ, who said: "I am the Way" (St. John xiv. 6). The showing, then, of Redemption and the Redeemer, Who had been desired for so many ages, was reserved for Mary, who merited to be called the "Manifester" of that time of which St. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman" (Gal. iv. 4). And again she is called our "Index," showing us the Way of knowledge leading to the Heavenly City. While she exercised her ardent zeal in showing her Infant to the *Magi, she also* exercised it in beseeching the Holy Ghost, her

Divine Spouse, to open the eyes and ears of the hearts of these blessed beholders, and she was "heard because of her reverence;" for, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they acknowledged and loved the New-born God, repented, and went away sanctified. Let us implore the Blessed Virgin to obtain for us a spark of her zeal, when we imitate her in showing to the people "the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world," in order that we may fulfil our office with fervour and accuracy, and obtain from the Holy Ghost the sanctification of those souls for whose profit we fulfil them. Above all let us implore her, that, having shown us by faith her Divine Son in this vale of tears, she would, after this exile, show to us His unveiled Face.

3. *The Magi found the Child with Mary his Mother*, but they did not find Joseph there. The presence of this chaste spouse might have awakened in the breast of the Magi, who were scarcely initiated in the Faith, some suspicion in regard to Mary's virginity, the miraculous conception of Jesus, and the whole economy of the Incarnation. Hence the Virgin, who ardently desired their instruction and salvation, did not show him who had shared her labours and her consolations. Rabanus says that Joseph went away in order not to give the Gentiles occasion for evil suspicions. And in order to do away with all suspicion of vanity, ambition, or luxury, she showed herself modestly clothed, in a single mantle, such as should not adorn her body, but cover her nakedness, and such as it became the wife of a carpenter, and a pilgrim to wear. To remove all suspicion, says St. Thomas, and to edify the Magi, the Mother of God appeared, not rich in worldly ornaments, but detached from the world and adorned with all virtues and perfection. So did the grace, with which she was filled, give faith to the Gentiles: "Hail, full of grace; this is the grace which thou givest . . . faith to the nations." So St. Peter Chrysologus. Now let us consider what precautions we are taking to give credit to our preaching. How often is a Mission rendered useless, not only because of some defect, or levity, or contention, or vanity, or self-interest on the part of the Missionary, but on account of some suspicion in regard to his conduct. How craftily does the Devil stir up some *evil interpretation* in the minds of the hearers

and penitents; how ready he is to spread abroad unfavourable tittle-tattle in order to destroy all edification and profit! Therefore what circumspection, what generous resolution, ought a zealous priest to exercise on this head! With the Apostle he should make the firm resolve, "If meat scandalise my brother, I will never eat flesh, lest I should scandalise my brother" (1 Cor. viii. 13). Take care, O Priest, lest thy freedom in speech, in looks, or in manner of life be a stumbling-block to the weak: "Take heed, lest perhaps this your liberty become a stumbling-block to the weak" (1 Cor. viii. 9). Think what an extreme of folly it is not to make some sacrifice, not to abstain from some trifle, not to mortify yourself in some little thing, in order to avoid the ruin of souls, lest, as St. Chrysostom warns us, we should be guilty of despising those souls which Christ has bought with His own Blood, and which are so precious in His sight.

"These things I remembered, and found out my soul in me."—*Ps.* xli. 5.
"And after this our exile, shew us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

PRIESTS SHOULD FIND THEIR HAPPIEST DWELLING-PLACE IN THE SANCTUARY.

I. BECAUSE THEY ARE PLEDGED TO THIS FROM THE BEGINNING OF THEIR LIFE AS CLERICS.

II. BECAUSE THEY ARE CALLED THERE BY THEIR FUNCTIONS.

III. BECAUSE THERE THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST IS TO BE FOUND.

"And when Jesus was twelve years old, they, going up into Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, . . . the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem."—*St. Luke* ii. 42, 43.

1. *When Jesus was twelve years old.* The Evangelist tells us that when Mary and Joseph went to the Temple they took the Holy Child with them, and so taught parents to take their children to church, that they might form this good habit at an early age; nor did Christ disdain to give this token of humility in His earliest years as an example to His followers. All therefore should frequent church, following this His example in His earthly life, if, as Venerable Bede says, they would afterwards behold intuitively the glory of His Divinity. Hence our parents accustomed us from our earliest years to visit the sanctuary, and to spend some time there. Afterwards, when we first entered on the ecclesiastical state, we were ordained *Ostiarii*, and the Bishop said to us: "Have . . . faithful care of the House of God, both day and night;" then we were ordained "Lectors," that we might read and sing in the Church, and the charge of spending our days—"living in the Church"—was laid upon us. In receiving the order of Exorcist, and still more that of Acolyte, the Bishop impressed on us, that we should choose the Church for our

abode. But what shall we say of the Subdiaconate? In conferring it, the Bishop declared to us "that it behoved us to be always engaged in the ministry of the Church." This obligation increased upon us when we were promoted to the "Diaconate," when we were made "Co-ministers and Co-operators of the Body and Blood of the Lord." But arrived at the "Priesthood," we became as it were the basis of the Temple. St. Gregory says: "Priests in the Church are pillars in the Temple." Having then ascended by so many steps, having taken upon ourselves so many obligations, having formed so long a habit, shall it weary us to remain in the Temple? Ought we not rather to find there all our delight? Birds choose their nests, and always return to them. Our nest is the Altar of the Living God: "The sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself, where she may lay her young ones. Thy Altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God" (Ps. lxxxiii. 4).

2. *According to the custom of the feast.* Under the Ancient Covenant, God ordained that on certain festivals, announced and celebrated by the Priests, all the people should repair to the Temple to assist at the sacred functions (Exod. xxiii. 14; Deut. xvi. 16). Under the New Covenant, we have more precious festivals, functions in every way more holy, and it is incumbent on Priests to promote their celebration. Hence it was decreed that Clerics who refused to come to the Church "should be deprived of the dignity of their office;" and Nepotian well deserved the praise given him by St. Jerome, who says of him, that wherever he might be sought, he was always found in the Church. The larger number of Ecclesiastics, their sacred array, their edifying appearance, the precision of the ceremonies, all contribute to the greater magnificence of the functions, and increase the holy joy and devotion of the faithful: "All the assembly of Israel . . . sacrificed rams and oxen without number. . . . all the priests that could be found there were sanctified" (2 Parap. v. 6—11). What a disgrace for us to see laymen devoted to the Church, glad to remain there, eager to assist at the sacred functions, whilst some Priests celebrate with haste and weariness the tremendous mysteries, and are *glad to get away.* The holy king Ezechias said to the Priests and

Levites: "The Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, and to minister to Him, and to worship Him" (2 Parap. xxix. 11). Surely artisans, who spend whole days at their work, merchants who are not weary of passing their lives in a shop, lawyers, who willingly employ so much time in the exercise of their profession, —all these men will arise in the judgment and condemn us. Is it possible, says St. Augustine, that charity cannot achieve as much as covetousness? And yet God never fails to bestow spiritual riches, and gives even a sufficiency of temporal emoluments, to those Priests who love the Ecclesiastical Functions, whilst He frequently leaves in misery and contempt those who prefer their own houses. "If thou hast thine own house," says St. Augustine, "thou art poor; if thou hast God's House, thou art rich."

3. *The Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem.* Jerusalem, as all know, signifies the Church Triumphant; it signifies also the Church Militant; and it signifies moreover the Sanctuary, which is the figure of both one and the other. The true and living Jesus Christ dwells beneath the Eucharistic species, while at the same time, and after another mode, He is also in Heaven, and after a third mode He is likewise present in the Catholic Church. Here the Great High Priest desires to be surrounded by His Ministers, and to be followed by them; nor would He have them leave Him: "If any man minister to Me let him follow Me, and where I am there also shall My minister be" (St. John xii. 26). In these words, says St. Thomas, Jesus Christ alludes particularly to Priests, from whom He justly expects a closer companionship. Even Prelates are ministers, inasmuch as they dispense the Sacraments to the Faithful; and He means to say, that as men follow their Lords, so ministers ought to follow closely their Great High Priest. Even under the Old Covenant, Almighty God ordered the Levites to dwell round about the Tabernacle, that they might be nearer His habitation: "The Levites shall pitch their tents round about the tabernacle, and they shall keep watch, and guard the tabernacle of the testimony" (Numbers i. 53). Far more then under the New Covenant, in which Jesus Christ has united them so closely to Himself, ought they to act as His courtiers; and so good Priests find *their repose, and* delight to sojourn there, saying

continually with the Prophet, "I have chosen to be an abject in the House of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners" (Ps. lxxxiii. 11). Truly is it not most unseemly that more should have been done by the Levites for the shadow and for the figure, says St. Peter Damian, than is done by us for the reality? In short, as St. Peter Chrysologus tells us, to assist in the Church, and to serve in the duties of the Sanctuary, should be the chief occupation of Priests.

"How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts; my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord."—*Ps.* lxxxiii. 2.

"Master, I will follow Thee, whithersoever Thou shalt go."—*St. Matt.* viii. 19.

MONDAY.

ATTACHMENT TO RELATIONS ALIENATES THE PRIEST FROM THE WORKS OF HIS MINISTRY.

I. BECAUSE RELATIONS GENERALLY KNOW NOT THE DUTIES OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

II. BECAUSE THEY WANT TO KEEP THE PRIEST ALWAYS AT HOME.

III. BECAUSE THEY EXPECT GAIN THROUGH HIM.

"And His Parents knew it not: And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance; and not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him."—*St. Luke* ii. 43, 44, 45.

1. *His Parents knew it not.* It was certainly through no fault of Mary or of Joseph, but by express design of the Divine Wisdom, that they knew not that the Holy Child had remained behind in Jerusalem. Among other ends, He desired to increase in them *the idea of His Divinity*, and of His independence, nor would He

suffer them, through tenderness, to turn Him away from disputing with the Doctors. Now if Mary and Joseph knew not adequately the designs of our Great High Priest in the fulfilment of His mission from the Eternal Father, far less do the parents of a priest know his duties. St. Augustine says, that if the office of preaching the Gospel allures thee, it is a sign, which God gives thee, to watch in His camp; He would have thee build a tower whence thou mayst both look out, and also repulse the enemy of thy eternal life; Christ's trumpet calls His soldier to battle, but thy mother stops thee, because she understands not these things. And, as he goes on to say, thy mother is deceived by the infernal serpent, when she insists on the duty of charity towards thy parents, in order to withdraw thee from the pure sincere charity of the Gospel. St. Bonaventure observes that, on this occasion, Jesus Christ was prefigured by Samson, who would not show his parents whence he had taken the honey, because they could not understand his great design of overthrowing the Philistines: "he would not tell them that he had taken the honey from the body of the lion" (Judges xiv. 9). In the fulfilment of this figure, our Saviour gave us an example, that, in God's service, we must not ask counsel of our earthly parents, for generally speaking they know not to what our priestly consecration obliges us; generally speaking, they understand only "earthly things" (Phil. iii. 19), and are unwilling to acknowledge the rights of a paternity superior to their own over their children.

2. *Thinking that He was in the company.* Our parents would like to see us always in their company, to have us always within the family circle. They do not grieve if a young man leaves them for the married life, because "a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife" (St. Matt. xix. 5), but they do grieve when a Priest, because of the sacred ties which bind him to the Church, leaves his relations. And yet, how often does God whisper the admonition to the soul of the Priest: "Forget thy people and thy father's house" (Ps. xlii. 11). Generally speaking, the mission of a Prophet is nowhere less useful than in his own home and among his own people: "A Prophet is not without honour save in his own country and in his own house" (St. Matt.

xiii. 57). Our fellow-citizens, having known us in our infancy, and throughout the whole course of our past life, it may be, despise us. St. Jerome says that they do not consider the works of the man as he now is, but remember the frailties of his childhood; the too great familiarity they have had with us, increases this contempt, for, as St. Chrysostom says, too great familiarity breeds contempt. The knowledge which they have of the inevitable defects of our common frailty, diminishes their respect, and so the fruit of our preaching is diminished, for, as St. Cyril says, preaching cannot bear fruit where the preacher is despised. How many Priests, through attachment to their families and country, have rendered themselves useless to the Church and to themselves! Is it possible that we may be of the number? Let us make generous resolutions, and implore grace that we may keep them.

3. *And sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and not finding Him*, &c. Mary and Joseph sought the Holy Child among their relations and acquaintances, but they did not find Him. Is it possible, then, that we shall find Him among our relations? "How shall I find Thee, good Jesus, among my kinsfolk," says St. Bonaventure, "Who wast not found amongst Thine own?" They make us lose sight of Jesus, of His glory and His will, and frequently involve us in worldly affairs, which engross us, and hinder us from laying up treasures for Eternity. St. Gregory tells us, that disordered affection for parents often drives Priests to the courts of law, involves them in disputes about worldly matters, robs them of their inward peace, and renews those worldly ties from which they had freed themselves. Our relations expect worldly advantages through us, and are perhaps no better than our Saviour's, who, out of covetousness and ambition, sought to make Him parade Himself before the world, saying: "If Thou do these things, manifest Thyself to the world" (St. John vii. 4). If they see us dedicated to the work of the ministry, without drawing thence gain, patronage, worldly glory and promotion, they are continually whispering in our ears, "What art thou doing for us?" Ah, let us remember, that in this case we must answer: "I know you not;" for this answer was to the praise of Levi, who *was the type of* our priesthood: "Who hath said to his father,

and to his mother, I do not know you, and to his brethren, I know you not" (Deut. xxxiii. 8).

"For my father and my mother have left me, but the Lord hath taken me up."—*Ps.* xxvi. 10.

"O Lord, for Thee, I condescend not to flesh and blood."—*Gal.* i. 16.

TUESDAY.

THE USEFULNESS OF ECCLESIASTICAL CONFERENCES.

I. CHRIST IS FOUND THERE.
II. QUESTIONS ARE ASKED OF CHRIST THERE.
III. CHRIST IS HEARD THERE.

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the Doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers."—*St. Luke* ii. 46, 47.

1. *They found Him . . . in the midst of the Doctors.* Several times every week, the Doctors were to be found in an outer vestibule of the Temple, seated on raised benches, in a circle, in the midst of which a numerous assembly was collected, to listen to their discourse; here Mary and Joseph found the Holy Child. Let us meditate on this great mystery, that we may draw instruction from it. If thou wouldst find Jesus, says Origen, seek Him among the Masters who are in the Temple; there shalt thou find Him. Go there, then, for there wilt thou find the Divine Word and Wisdom; that is, the Son of God. Jesus Christ has promised that, "where there are two or three gathered together in His name," there will He be found in the midst of them (St. Matt. xviii. 20). Nor, says St. Hilary, is it wonderful, that He, being Peace and Charity, should abide amongst men of peace and good will, and who are *assembled* in that spirit: and St. Gregory

observes that, if Jesus Christ deigns to be where there are two or three, much more will He be found where many priests are gathered together. St. Germanus declares, that the greater the number met together, and the greater their zeal and piety, the greater will be the increase of light and direction, which Jesus Christ will vouchsafe to them. Let us remember that "God hath stood in the congregation of gods" (Ps. lxxxi. 1), and therefore let us go to our Conference, with the intention of finding Jesus in the midst of the Doctors. He will accept our visit, and replenish us with His heavenly light.

2. *Hearing them and asking them questions.* Our Divine Lord, in order to show that He was truly man, says Venerable Bede, questioned men who were regarded as Masters, and listened to them with humility; and as Metaphrastes says, it was reasonable that He should ask, it was prudent that He should hear. Let us then imitate Him in consulting wise and prudent priests, who are assembled in Ecclesiastical Conferences. Let us not suffer ourselves to be vanquished by self-love; if we are men it becomes us to ask questions, nor should we consider it derogatory to our honour to listen to the teaching of others: "Stand in the multitude of ancients that are wise, and join thyself from thy heart to their wisdom, that thou mayst hear every discourse of God" (Eccl. vi. 35). Controverted points soon become clearer by discussion, for God, says St. Basil, rewards the humility of those who ask, by granting them light; and, as St. Isidore observes, Conferences are far better than reading; for when questions are proposed, solutions of them are given, and it is often by means of objections that hidden truth is discovered. Hence St. Bernard lamented the rarity of Conferences, in which Morals were discussed, while priests gladly amused themselves by talking about worldly gain. How far better should we have employed our time, had we frequented our Conferences, instead of loitering it away in idleness, in gossiping and paying visits! How many mistakes may we have fallen into in the Confessional, for want of the lights we might have gained in them, and what excuse can we make at the Divine Tribunal?

3. *And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and answers.* Venerable Bede says, that on this occasion, the Divine

Tongue of the Saviour showed His wisdom; and Origen declares, that from the same fountain of wisdom whence issued His sublime questions, issued also His all-wise answers. Christ gave us the pattern of Ecclesiastical Conferences on another occasion, when engaged in spiritual discourses with His disciples (St. Matt. xvi. 23). From the earliest days of the Church the Apostles and Priests did the same, and Jesus, as Doctor of Doctors, was invisibly present in the midst of their assemblies. Hence, many Synods have recommended these Conferences to Priests, and imposed penalties on those who neglect them. Let us consider how men of God, guided by light from above, have instituted these Conferences in every Diocese, and how exemplary priests meet together in them, intent on listening to their Spiritual Father, as St. Augustine says, with devout attention and in respectful silence. The reason is this: in these Conferences it is Christ we listen to; it is He Who enlightens us, exhorts us, reproves us, encourages us by means of His Ministers. How often has He renewed the mystery on which we are meditating in this Gospel! How often, by the lips of some young priest, has He made His voice heard in the depths of our hearts! How often, as He Himself tells us by the mouth of the Wise Man, has Jesus shown Himself our admirable and subtle Teacher in the person of youthful priests! "For the sake of wisdom . . . . I shall have honour with the ancients . . . . and I shall be found of a quick conceit in judgment, and shall be admired in the sight of the mighty" (Wisdom viii. 10, 11). In these Conferences He has given us fraternal charity, a bond of union, fitting prayers, a treasury of Indulgences, an example of virtue—in short, all that belongs to the Ecclesiastical Spirit. Let us then repent that we have profited so little by so great a good, and let us make the resolution which the Venerable Servant of God, Mariano Arcieri, often made, and which he wrote in his Breviary, "never to keep away from the Conference without grave necessity."

"I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, in the counsel of the just, and in the congregation."—*Ps.* cx. 1.

"The Lord is a God of all knowledge, and to Him are thoughts prepared."—1 *Kings* ii. 3.

WEDNESDAY.

THE GLORIOUS DESTINY OF THE CLERGY.

I. THEY ARE NOT OF THE WORLD.
II. THEY ARE OF GOD.
III. HOW FEW SUCH ARE FOUND!

"And He said to them: How is it that you sought Me? did you not know that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the word that He spoke unto them."—*St. Luke* ii. 49, 50.

1. *How is it that you sought Me?* These are the first words of our Divine Lord which the Evangelist records. These words, and those which follow them, contain a declaration of the mystery of the Incarnation, and its end; they reveal to us the dedication of Jesus to His Father's glory, and our salvation, and He puts them in the mouth of all those whom He associates with Him in His Priesthood, in order that they may give the same answer to the men of the world, if, at any time, they seek to divert them from their Ministry. So did He answer His Mother, not to blame her three days' search for Him, but, as Venerable Bede tells us, to cause her to raise her eyes to His Heavenly Father, to Whom His whole life was due. Now let us pass from the Head of all Priests to His Members; from Christ to ourselves, who have here a most important lesson given us. If, when the duties of His Priesthood were in question, He answered His Blessed Mother in this manner, shall we be too harsh if we give the like answer to the men of the world? O Minister of God, should the world seek to regain thee, to bind thee anew to itself, and, with manifold solicitations urge thy return, answer it in these words: "How is it that you sought me?" God has chosen thee, and *separated thee* from this world: "you are not of the world, but

I have chosen you out of the world" (St. John xv. 19); and thou hast chosen God for the portion of thine inheritance; therefore, as St. Isidore warns thee, thou oughtest to serve Him alone. Stand on thy guard, for many blandishments, many promises will the World make use of, to draw thee to itself; it will set its fatal snares in order to involve thee in worldly actions, and to divert thee from the care of the Sanctuary. So St. Peter Damian. But Jesus has put this great answer in thy mouth, and note well this, "how is it?" for, says St. Augustine, all that the world offers is nothing, is "What?" a trifle which deludes and bewitches: "the bewitching of vanity" (Wisd. iv. 12); and yet this nothing, this trifle, puts thee in peril of losing everything, of losing thine eternal happiness. Whosoever of the Sacred Order, says St. Peter Damian, desires to live innocently, must not often tread in the world's ways, lest he fall into the meshes of its snares.

2. *Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?* The men of the World do not understand the high destiny of the Priesthood, and sometimes even Priests themselves do not realise it; but our Great High Priest has taught it to us in a few words: "I must be about My Father's business." St. Bonaventure observes that these words are explained by those other words of our Saviour, "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent me" (St. John vi. 38); and Metaphrastes says, that Jesus meant to show, that he who goes wandering about among earthly matters will not attain perfection. The Priest should be "a man of God;" that is, God's alone: "but thou, O man of God, fly these things" (1 Tim. vi. 11); and St. Chrysostom remarks on this expression, that the Saints were called "Men of God," because they preserved in themselves the image of God, pure and entire. In this sense was this title given to Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 1), to Samuel (1 Kings ix. 6), and to Elias (4 Kings i. 11). How can we be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ if we are not even giving ourselves to the promotion of God's glory? If a great part of our thoughts, words, and actions are directed to earthly goods, shall we be Saints, "Men of God"? St. Charles impressed upon his priests, that they were not to waste *in idle or* vain occupations such time as

was free from the Divine Offices, Ecclesiastical functions, and other necessary actions, but that he who is called to the work of the Lord, should meditate day and night on His Law. We have a Heavenly Father, Who has given us all that we possess, and He has given it us for Himself; we have a Heavenly Father, Who has incorporated us with His Son, and He would have us followers of this great pattern; we have a Heavenly Father, Who beholds us with an infinite penetration, and Who will amply reward all our merits; why, then, do we occupy ourselves with aught else but His service? Every moment, says St. Bernard, that we have not employed for Him, let us count as lost, and lost for eternity.

3. *And they understood not.* St. Bonaventure observes that Christ gave His Apostles an example of speaking of the hidden wisdom of God, and of speaking of it in a mystery: "we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, which is hidden" (1 Cor. ii. 7). He spoke of His Divinity, and they understood not what He spoke to them, says Venerable Bede. What a lesson for us! Jesus speaks of His dedication to His Father's glory, and Mary, the Seat of Wisdom, does not understand him. This mysterious circumstance, mentioned by the Evangelist, clearly signifies that the destiny of the Clergy, and our high aim, will frequently be misunderstood; and, therefore, we must not wonder at the many prejudices which exist, rooted not only in the minds of laymen, but even of ecclesiastics also: "and they understood not." They understand not that Holy Orders have consecrated us to God, have made us so many victims to His Eternal Majesty; and that, therefore, freed from all secular affairs, we ought to serve God alone. So St. Peter Damian. They understand not, in short, that, at our Ordination, we bound ourselves to God, to promote His glory; to the Church, to render Her service; to the Faithful, to procure their salvation; to ourselves, to save our souls. They understand not that, though we may be neither parish priests, nor beneficed priests, still the intimation given us by the Bishop when he ordained us Priests, exists, and that the same duties are imposed on us. They understand not that the Council of Trent, in *admitting to the* Priesthood him who has a patrimony instead of

a benefice, does not free him from those obligations, but imposes them even on him. "The senseless man shall not know, nor will the fool understand these things" (Ps. xci. 7). But let us persuade ourselves of their truth; let us endeavour to persuade our brethren, who are in error, of their truth; let us impress those truths on the young whose feet are directed towards the Sanctuary, repeating to them continually those words of the Apostle: "You are not your own" (1 Cor. vi. 19).

"The lines are fallen unto me in goodly places: for my inheritance is goodly to me."—*Ps.* xv. 6.

"The Lord is my portion, said my soul."—*Lament.* iii. 24.

THURSDAY.

THE OBEDIENCE OF PRIESTS, AND THE EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE GIVEN THEM BY THEIR DIVINE PATTERN.

I. JESUS OBEYED WITHOUT DELAY.
II. JESUS OBEYED WITHOUT DISCUSSION.
III. JESUS OBEYED WITHOUT EXCEPTION.

"And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to em. And His mother kept all these words in her heart."—*St. Luke* ii. 51.

1. *And He went down with them.* The disputation with the Doctors being ended, and an answer given to Mary's question, our Lord might have remained with the Doctors, or with some of the dwellers in Jerusalem, for all were anxious for closer intercourse with a child who united so great learning, wisdom, and prudence, to beauty of person, sweetness of voice, and the modesty of youth. But He did not remain with them, but quietly joining Mary and Joseph, delayed not to go down from the Temple with them. He

had told them, that it was necessary for Him to attend to His Father's business; but as this did not pacify them, He disdained not to follow them immediately, says St. Bernard. The Master follows the Disciples, God follows men, the Word and the Wisdom of God follows a carpenter and a woman. So that, in the nature He had assumed, He not only "became obedient" to God His Father (Phil. ii. 8), and according "as the Father had given Him commandment," met death at the "hour" He had ordained (St. John xiv. 31, viii. 20), but He also obeyed men, promptly and without delay. And this He did, because He would have us do the same, showing us in Himself the pattern He would have us imitate. We priests, even if we are not religious, have superiors in our families, in the works of our ministry, in ecclesiastical societies, in the direction of our own consciences, and in our own order, and we each answered, "I promise," when the ordaining Bishop required the promise of "respect and obedience." Now, St. Bonaventure says, that the chiefest excellency of obedience is promptness; and St. Bernard says that he is faithfully obedient who knows not delay, who flies procrastination, who is ignorant of slowness. Is our submission thus prompt? Do we thus imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in this virtue?

2. *And came to Nazareth.* Our Divine Lord was not consulted in regard to the choice of Nazareth, nor would He speak of it; but Joseph feared to return to Judæa, and being directed in sleep by a Divine illumination, fixed his abode there. There was no discussion, nor did the Divine Child say that a day would come when the title of *Nazarene* would be given Him as a reproach, and would earn for Him the contempt of His nation; when it would be said: "Can any thing of good come from Nazareth?" (St. John i. 46). Let us, then, learn to obey without discussion, for the great merit of obedience consists in sacrificing our judgment as well as our will to God, and therefore "obedience is better than sacrifices" (1 Kings xv. 22). St. Gregory says, in sacrifices we offer the flesh of others, in obedience we sacrifice ourselves. Possibly the Superior may not have just cause for *what* he commands, but the subject has always just cause for *obeying, since he* thereby obeys the Supreme Cause, that is, God.

Let us remember that our Superior represents the person of Jesus Christ, as St. Basil teaches us; and, therefore, we ought to execute his orders as if they were those of God. Let us be convinced, with St. Augustine, that the obedience which discusses the motives of the command is not well pleasing to God; let us be convinced that, as St. Jerome says, whatever our Superior commands is most salutary for us. Let us repent, if our conscience reproves us for any shortcoming in this respect.

3. *And was subject to them.* Jesus Christ, throughout the whole period of His private life, displayed the most perfect obedience. He was subject, not only to the orders of Mary, but to those of Joseph, and, as St. Basil observes, received from them the work which He executed daily. He, the Maker of the Universe, the Only-begotten Son of the Omnipotent Creator, was content to employ Himself in manual labour, with a reputed father who followed the same trade: "Is not this the carpenter's Son?" (St. Matt. xiii. 55); "Is not this the Carpenter?" (St. Mark vi. 3). Let us meditate with St. Bernard, who it is that is subject? and to whom is He subject? "Who? to whom? God to men?" Blush then, O man, proud ashes! God subjects Himself to men, and wilt thou, in thy desire to rule over men, set thyself against thy Creator Himself? We, Ecclesiastics, are enjoined by the Apostolic Canons to obey our own Pastors without any exception whatever: "Priests and Deacons may do nothing without the will of the Bishop." Without this universal dependence there could not be that peace in the House of God which springs from harmony between him who commands and him who obeys, as St. Augustine says. Nothing is so useful for our souls, nothing so meritorious, nothing so safe as obedience. How many victories might we celebrate if we were obedient: "an obedient man shall speak victories" (Prov. xxi. 28). Let us imitate the Ever Virgin Mother, who treasured in Her heart this example of Her Son, and let us beg of Her to make us continually practise that virtue, which is, as St. Gregory says, the parent and guardian of the rest.

"That I should do Thy will, O my God, I have desired it."—*Ps.* xxxix. 9.

"The Lord God hath opened my ear, and I do not resist."—*Isaias* l. 5.

FRIDAY.

THE CONTINUAL PROGRESS OF PRIESTS IN THE WAY OF PERFECTION.

I. They should progress in Wisdom,
II. In Grace,
III. Before God and Men.

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men."—*St. Luke* ii. 55.

1. *Jesus advanced in wisdom and age.* In Jesus were "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3) from the first moment of His conception; but, as the Sun, which is always equally luminous in itself, enlightens our earth in proportion as it rises above our horizon, so did Jesus, the Sun of Justice, shed forth brighter rays of Wisdom as He advanced in age. So St. Thomas. By this apparent progress, He gave us an example, and merited grace for us His members to grow in Wisdom, so that it is well said by St. John Damascene that Jesus "advanced not in Himself, but in His members." St. Gregory calls Priests the chiefest and noblest Members of Christ, therefore it is more incumbent on them than on laymen to advance in Wisdom; in them, the light of truth ought to grow apace, until it attains its full meridian: "as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day." So St. Jerome would have us always keep a good book in our hands, that we might grow in light. In this way, language and understanding will grow in us, and we shall profit by the practice of what we read; for, as St. Isidore says, he who reads, advances greatly, if he practises what he reads. But it often happens that the abandonment of books, weariness

of study, want of meditation, and the neglect of Ecclesiastical Conferences, instructive colloquies and preaching, combine to diminish the light which we had in our early days as Seminarists, so that many Priests must lament that they made a better figure in their youth than they do in their maturer age. If the vine then promised grapes it has "brought forth only wild grapes" (Isa. v. 2). Are we of this number? Let us judge ourselves before we are judged.

2. *And grace.* Jesus was "full of grace and truth" (St. John i. 14) from the first moment of His conception; but as He advanced in the years of His mortal life, He manifested His grace progressively, so that, as Venerable Bede puts it, He continually showed increased modesty, perfection, prudence, piety, fortitude, and every other virtue, in His countenance, in His bearing, in His speech, and in His actions. In our beginning we have not the fulness of Grace, but we may attain it from His fulness (St. John i. 16). By continual progress, this may by degrees be attained, so that, as St. Gregory Nazianzen tells us, not to advance in virtue is in us a vice. Hunger and thirst after Justice, to which our Divine Lord has attached one of the Beatitudes, carries with it an ardent desire of growing in justice, that is, in habitual grace; for St. Jerome says: "It does not suffice to wish for justice, we must hunger after it; let us never regard ourselves as sufficiently just, but be ever hungering after the works of justice." Therefore, if, in examining our conscience, we find that we have not made progress in virtue, let us be sure that we have gone back; for St. Bernard says: "Not to advance is to go back." Let us seek to revive our grace; let us awake from our slumbers; the hour is come, the end of our day is near at hand.

3. *With God and men.* Christ, who chose to remain three-and-thirty years on earth, passed thirty years in a hidden and obscure life—that is, in humiliation, in poverty, and in labour. Oh, most high designs of Eternal Wisdom! With Isaias we may exclaim: "Thou art a Hidden God" (xlv. 15). Thus did He cure the deepest wound which the sin of Adam had inflicted on us, that pride which naturally inclines us to make ourselves known, esteemed, praised, and admired by men: "with men, not with

God." Thus did He also teach the young, who are drawn towards the Ministry of the Gospel, not to set forward on this divine charge, till they have first spent a few years in the exercise of solid, hidden virtues; till they have vanquished self-love, which easily puts on the appearance of zeal, whilst it seeks only its own satisfaction and its own glory in the Apostolic functions: "with men, not with God." Let us convince ourselves that to please God is a duty of justice: to please men in order to lead them to God is a duty of mercy: "the first is of justice, the second of mercy," says St. Bonaventure; and as Theophylact tells us, we must think first of pleasing God, and then of pleasing men. And God Himself so orders it, that if we do not disturb this holy order, we shall find grace with Him, and as far as is good for us, with men also, like our Divine Master, who, says St. Bonaventure, sought not His own glory, but God's glory; not His own convenience, but our salvation; and therefore He found grace before God and men. Let us pray to God that we may never forget these maxims, and that He would make us go on without weariness, growing in Wisdom and in Grace without fainting.

"When my strength shall fail, do not Thou forsake me."—*Ps.* lxx. 9.

"Let us lift up our hearts with our hands, to the Lord in the heavens."—*Lam.* iii. 41.

SATURDAY.

BY THE LOSS OF HER SON, MARY EXCITES THREE AFFECTIONS IN THE HEARTS OF PRIESTS.

I. COMPASSION.
II. DILIGENCE.
III. CONFIDENCE.

"And seeing Him, they wondered. And His mother said to Him: Son, why hast Thou done so to us? behold Thy Father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."—*St. Luke* ii. 48.

1. *Son, why hast Thou done so to us? behold Thy Father and I sorrowing.* Thus did Mary with maternal confidence, with humility and with affection, express the bitterness of Her grief. In none other of Her cruel sufferings, but in this only, did She open Her lips in gentle lamentation, for there was the bitterness of great tribulation in Her heart, says St. Bonaventure. That we may realise the bitterness of this loss, let us remember that Mary loved Her only Son most tenderly and above all things, and, as St. Bonaventure says further, we cannot lose without immense grief what we possess with immense love. Origen concludes from this, that She suffered greater torment through the loss of our Lord's bodily presence, than any Martyr ever suffered through the separation of body and soul. Moreover, in Her other sorrows, the Blessed Virgin knew the reason of them, and this softened the pain, but She knew not the motive of this loss, and Her humility made Her fear that He had left Her because He did not consider that His Mother had served Him well. The lamentation of Anna at the departure of the young Tobias (Job x.) was but a faint image of Mary's distress. Who would not compassionate Thee, O de-

solate Mother? Thou hast lost the Divine Light, the Life of Thy soul. Where can He be found? What can have happened to Him? Why has He left Thee? Where shalt Thou find Him? I compassionate Thee because I love Thee, and I would share in those tears which Thou sheddest for no fault of Thine.

2. *Have sought Thee.* We ought to meditate on the ardour with which the Blessed Virgin diligently and prudently sought Her lost Child. What sleep could She give to Her eyes, what rest to Her feet, says St. Bonaventure, until she had found Him? She went "in the streets and the broad ways," asking who had seen Him: "Have you seen Him whom my soul loveth?" (Cant. iii. 3). Now, in this search Mary shows us three sublime and hidden mysteries. Cornelius à Lapide says that Mary represented the Church, who, amidst persecutions, might seek her Heavenly Spouse, as though He were lost, hidden from Her, having abandoned Her to the bitterest sufferings. Further, She is the pattern and the consolation of souls whom God visits by interior desolations. Finally, She acquired the merit of being recognised as the advocate and refuge of sinners, who have lost the spiritual presence of Jesus. Meanwhile these sorrowful mysteries of the loss of Jesus remind us of the weightiest obligations of our Ministry, which we can only hope to fulfil faithfully under the powerful patronage of Our Lady. Priests are the guardians of the Church, and they should aid the Church in adversity, for it is to them that St. Bernard says: "The Church . . . is thy City, watch to keep it in peace. She is thy Spouse, study her adornment." They have to direct and comfort holy souls in darkness, in aridity, in desolation of spirit, says St. Gregory. Finally, they have to lead sinners back to Jesus, to cause them to recover His grace and His presence by means of the three parts of penance, "Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction," typified by the three days during which Mary sought Jesus. And what shall we do ourselves if we have the misfortune to lose Him by mortal sin? What, but to have recourse to Mary that She may reconcile us to Her offended Son?

3. *And seeing Him they wondered.* Who can form an idea of the surprise and consolation which Mary and Joseph experienced *when they beheld* the Holy Child? Then, says St. Bonaventure,

did the Virgin Mother rejoice with a great joy, an ineffable gladness. When she heard His voice, His questions, and His answers to the Doctors, her soul "melted" as it were for joy (Cant. v. 6). She had never lost her confidence in God, and therefore she was not deceived. Nor must we ever lose confidence in God's mercy, neither in the adversities of the Church, nor in the interior desolations of spiritual persons, nor even in the fall of Christians into grave sin, for He will crown this confidence with great consolations: "do not therefore lose your confidence which hath a great reward" (Heb. x. 35). Great confidence in God merits a great reward, and shows that magnanimity which is so pleasing to Him, and which obtains all things, says St. Bonaventure. The day will come when Jesus Christ will show Himself present as our Protector, our Master, our Friend, our Spouse, and then will His Bride say to Him: "I found Him Whom my soul loveth; I held Him, and I will not let Him go" (Cant. iii. 4). This confidence, however, does not dispense us from working, even as Mary was not dispensed from seeking, and she well understood that God is found by labour and sorrow. It is necessary, says Origen, that they who seek Jesus should not go about it negligently and carelessly . . . but with labour and sorrow. Nor must we loiter in vain tranquillity, as if God did not require of those who confide in Him the sacrifice of their rest. As they have the confidence of hope, says St. Gregory, let them not grow sluggish in careless security.

"Depart not from me, for tribulation is very near."—*Ps.* xxi. 12.

"Whither is Thy Beloved gone, O Thou most beautiful among women? Whither is Thy Beloved turned aside, and we will seek Him with Thee?"—*Cant.* v. 17.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

THE PRIESTHOOD ASSISTS AT THE MARRIAGE IN CANA.

I. The Great Priestess.
II. The Great High Priest.
III. The First Priests.

"There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the Mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage."—*St. John* ii. 1, 2.

1. *The Mother of Jesus was there.* The Mother is mentioned in the first place, because, without Her, they would not have dared to invite Jesus, whose modesty and retiredness were well known; therefore, as St. Thomas explains it, they went to Her, and consulted Her about inviting Her Son to the marriage. We must understand, then, that it is necessary to go to the Mother, if we desire to obtain the presence and assistance of Jesus, either at spiritual or carnal espousals. It was fitting that Our Blessed Lady should assist at this banquet, since in Her chaste womb the most august of all espousals, the union of human nature to the Word, was effected; thence He came forth, "as a bridegroom coming out of his bride-chamber" (Ps. xviii. 6); for, as St. Augustine explains it, "in Him coming forth out of the Virgin's womb, God was united to man's nature as a Bridegroom to a Bride." Moreover She was adorned by the noblest of Espousals; for, says St. Bonaventure, "She was the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, beautiful in Her life, sweet in discourse." She was the Spouse of chaste *love, of singular* fruitfulness, of attentive instruction, who, for the

singular purity of Her virginity, and the profound abyss of Her humility, brought forth the Only-begotten Son of the Most High Father. So St. Bernard. It was fitting that She should come to this banquet of the poor, in order to exercise Her humility and Her piety, and to manifest Her mercy and power with Her Son, to all future ages. Lastly, it was fitting that, beginning from this day, She should be declared, as St. John Damascene calls Her, the true Patroness of the banquet of spiritual nuptials, when She feeds Her guests with a torrent of pleasures. Moreover She is recognised as the Protectress of earthly marriages when they are entered into according to the Will of God; She is careful to protect the newly-married amid the difficulties of this important period of their life, being, says St. Ephrem, "our fervent protector in this present way of life . . . and placing us in the way of salvation."

2. *And Jesus also was invited.* Our great High Priest was present, in order to teach us a great truth, that is, the sanctity of marriage, which He has raised to the dignity of a Sacrament; furnishing us with a shield against the darts of the Manichæans, Marcionites, Tatianists, and Encratites, who condemned matrimony. Venerable Bede tells us that He desired to establish this great maxim in the minds of His followers, viz., that "conjugal chastity is good, the continence of widowhood better, virginity the most perfect of all;" therefore was He born of the Virgin Mary, therefore was He acknowledged by Anna the widow, and honoured the marriage of Cana with His presence. He was also present in order to declare Himself the Spouse of the Church (Apoc. xxi. 9; Eph. v. 27), the Spouse of faithful souls, and the Spouse, in an especial manner, of innumerable Virgins. In short, it was well that the Heavenly Bridegroom should be present at the nuptial feast, and from thence begin the series of His miracles. Let us adore Him under this title, which inspires alike love and reverence, and let us implore Him to keep us faithful to Him.

3. *And His disciples.* Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, and possibly John, took part in this mystical banquet. They were the first-fruits and representatives of the new Priesthood, and they declared, by their presence, that the Priests of the New Covenant

would assist at marriages, and bless them. Moreover Jesus instructed them by His example as to the manner in which this Sacrament was to be used. They were to offer it as a means of salvation to weak Christians: "if they do not contain themselves, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. vii. 9); and therefore St. John Chrysostom inculcated the prudence of effecting a virtuous marriage for the young, before they were corrupted by luxury. But at the same we must change the Water into Wine. Water is the symbol of ignorance: "dark waters in the clouds of the air" (Ps. xvii. 12). Ignorance is dissipated by instructing the Faithful in regard to the sanctity of marriage, as to the duties it brings with it, and the end for which it was instituted. Let us make them understand that "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled" (Heb. xiii. 4), and that its end, as St. Augustine teaches, is that generation may prepare for Regeneration. Thus, to the young man is offered the good wine of instruction, by means of which, as St. Augustine says, "that hath taste which before was tasteless, that inebriates which before did not inebriate." Moreover Water is changed into Wine, when a curb is put upon sensuality, of which Water is a figure, for sensuality is essentially the enemy of Divine love, that sacred fire which it extinguishes in the heart: "Thou art poured out as water," said Jacob to the lustful Reuben (Gen. xlix. 4). But the Priest changes it into the wine of holy love: "I will give thee a cup of spiced wine" (Cant. viii. 2); into the wine of compunction: "Thou hast made us drink of the wine of sorrow" (Ps. lix. 5). Meanwhile the Disciples learnt from Jesus priestly modesty in such circumstances; they learnt not to mix themselves up with temporal affairs, but to succour the needy, so that marriages might be celebrated decently. Moreover they were designed to be the authors and promoters of other and more sublime nuptials. They were to burn with a holy jealousy, striving that the Heavenly Spouse might find His whole Church as a chaste virgin, whom He might bring into His eternal nuptial chamber: "For I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 2). They were

to preach Virginity, and make the Faithful understand that "it is good for a man so to be" (1 Cor. vii. 26). So would they lead many unspotted spouses to Christ, so would they maintain them through life by their example, by the ministry of the Word, and by the administration of the Sacraments. Therefore were they called "children of the bridegroom" (St. Matt. ix. 15), "children of the marriage feast" (St. Mark ii. 19). Let us recognise our dignity, and let us labour, all the days of our life, to keep the Spouse of Jesus without "spot or wrinkle," so that, with Her, we may enjoy that ineffable banquet which is prepared for us in heaven.

"O Lord, how great are Thy works! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep."—*Ps.* xci. 6.

"Blessed are they that are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."—*Apoc.* xix. 9.

MONDAY.

MARY PLEADS THE CAUSE OF ALL, AND ESPECIALLY THE CAUSE OF PRIESTS.

I. WHAT WINE IS THAT WHICH WE NEED.

II. HOW GREAT IS MARY'S COMPASSION IN ASKING IT FOR US.

III. HER EFFICACY IN OBTAINING IT.

"And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him, They have no wine."—*St. John* ii. 3.

1. *And the wine failing.* This wine, which, not without a mystical meaning, failed at the marriage in Cana, in Holy Scripture signifies three things; and all three came to us by means of Mary, and are considered, says St. Augustine, as "mysteries which are hidden in this miracle of the Lord." Men had the Water of

Wisdom in the Sacred Scripture, but it was without savour, until Christ disclosed the meaning of it, so that they might understand and relish it: thus He changed Water into Wine. "He made Wine of the Water," says St. Augustine, "when He opened their understanding, and expounded to them the Scriptures." In the second place, until the Divine Enkindler of holy fire came upon earth, another Wine failed men—the grace of devotion and the fervour of charity, says St. Bernard. Lastly, that Wine failed which "springeth forth virgins" (Zach. ix. 17), that Wine which maketh "cheer the heart of man" (Ps. ciii. 15); that is, the Blood of Jesus Christ failed, which He gives us to drink, and of which this miracle, wrought at the marriage feast, was, as it were, the prelude. In all these three senses the Wine came to us by means of Mary; for, through Her came the Blessed One. She, says St. John Damascene, is the Living Ladder, whereby the true Emanuel descended from heaven to earth. And it is the will of God that, as all the benefits signified by this Wine came to us by means of Mary, so also, by Her means, they should be dispensed in every age. Let us then invoke Her that we may enjoy the fulness of these benefits, and let us bless Her for having obtained them for the world.

2. *The Mother of Jesus saith to Him.* Mary saw the need of the bridegroom and the bride without being informed of it; She beseeches her Son without being entreated, She begs a miracle on an occasion which does not seem to merit it. For here there is no question of restoring an only son to a desolate widow, of curing a sick man cruelly tormented, of succouring the wretched in the extremity of their need. But Mary's bowels of compassion are so tender, so full of mercy, that to spare this family a little shame, She solicits the Omnipotent to work a miracle. She being truly the fountain of compassion, what could flow thence if not compassion? What could the bowels of compassion produce save this? Observe then Her compassion. Being full of mercy, says St. Thomas, She hastened to aid the necessity of others. Now She continues to do for us in heaven precisely what She did on earth for this family; and herein the Holy Spirit shows us that *Our Blessed* Mother is ever our compassionate and sedulous advo-

cate with Her Son. And if She is merciful for all, what will She be for Priests? Frequently She anticipates our desires, She hastens to help us, without being entreated. What then will She do for us if we call upon Her, if we are devout to Her, if we confide in Her patronage? At the hour of death we shall see from how many impending evils She delivered us, and how many benefits, which we never thought of, She obtained for us. Then shall we say, "This Wisdom went before me, and I knew not that She was the mother of them all" (Wisd. vii. 12).

3. *They have no Wine.* She speaks those three words to Jesus without any appearance of concern or uneasiness, and this reverent prayer, under the veil of a simple statement, was sufficient. Jesus well knew what His Mother desired, and to please Her anticipated His time for working miracles, in order that we might understand how powerful is Her intercession. St. Chrysostom says, that although our Divine Lord answered Her with an apparent harshness, still, to honour His Mother, He granted Her prayer. He seemed to refuse Her, because He said His hour was not yet come; but yet, says Venerable Bede, He conferred the grace, not choosing to withstand His Mother. Who then can doubt of Mary's power with Her Divine Son? Through Her we shall obtain that "Threefold Wine, which," says St. Thomas, "failed before the Incarnation," and we Priests need it more than others. Recalling the significations of this Wine, let us consider how necessary for us is the understanding of Holy Scripture, because the Priest is "a Master in Israel" (St. John iii. 10). Alas! the need we have of greater charity, because he who loves Christ most is the best feeder of His flock (St. John xxi. 15). Finally, we ought to present ourselves at the Altar worthily disposed to drink of the Sacred Chalice, to inebriate ourselves with the Blood of Christ. "Come, My friends, and be inebriated, My dearly beloved" (Cant. v. 1). Let us then turn to this great Mother that She may obtain for us this threefold Wine, and let us imitate him who was Her especially devout client, St. Bernard, who often thus implored Her powerful intercession: "When I am in necessity I entreat the Mother of Mercy that She may suggest it to Her Benign Son, for I have no Wine." May She speak on

behalf of Clerics, and do now in reality what at the feast of Cana She did in figure, for, without Thy Mediation, O Mary, "we have no wine."

"My Chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it!"—*Ps.* xxii. 5.

"Now, therefore, pray for us, for thou art a holy woman."—*Judith* viii. 29.

TUESDAY.

THE SAVIOUR LAYS DOWN THE RULE OF OUR MINISTRY.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS RULE.
II. THE REASON OF THIS RULE.
III. THE APPLICATION OF THIS RULE.

"And Jesus saith to Her: Woman, what is it to Me and to Thee? My hour is not yet come."—*St. John* ii. 4.

1. *And Jesus saith to Her.* Jesus spoke thus to His Mother, and He knew perfectly well the horrible abuse which heretics would make of these few words; that the Manichæans would take occasion from them to deny the reality of Christ's Body; the Valentinians, to deny that His Body was like ours; the Ebionites and the Helvidians, to deny Mary's virginity; the Priscillianists, to deny free will, and make it subject to the influences of the stars. He knew perfectly well how much our Doctors would have to do against these heretics, but nothing hindered Him from uttering this sentence, for He knew its importance, seeing it was to form the rule for Priests, the first-fruits of whom were then present. They were to understand, that if Parents intermeddled with the affairs of their Ministry, or commanded what was unreasonable, or hindered spiritual progress, or diverted them from the care of souls, they must not be obeyed. "When parents require any-

thing unreasonably, and cause hindrance in any spiritual matter, it is unsafe to obey," says St. Chrysostom. And in order that weak priests should not excuse themselves by alleging their parents' dignity, their wisdom, their sanctity, their tenderness for their children, the habit they had formed of obeying them, Jesus Christ spoke, in appearance, thus harshly to the most worthy of all creatures, to Her who is called by St. Germanus "Dignity of dignity;" He spoke thus to Mary, whom Albertus Magnus calls "Wisdom in whom was ignorance of no secret;" He spoke thus to Her, of whom Origen says that She was "Full of Sanctity;" He spoke thus to Her, whom Dionysius calls "the most familiar and dear Friend of the Omnipotent Lord;" He spoke thus to His Mother, whom He had obeyed for thirty years (St. Luke ii. 51). What excuse then shall we be able to allège at His Tribunal, if, to please our parents, we shall have omitted the duties of our ministry? How many sad records of this unworthy condescension do we meet with in the Annals of the Church! "If they shall have no dominion over me," said a great Pontiff, in reference to this subject, "then shall I be without spot" (Ps. xviii. 14).

2. *Woman, what is it to Me and to Thee?* St. Bernard observes that when Jesus spoke these words to Mary, She might have answered Him, "What is a mother and a son?" That is to say, Thou art truly my Son, and dost Thou ask me, "What have I to do with Thee?" But She well understood the mystery of this answer, and was satisfied in regard to the miracle She desired; She understood that Jesus, being about to work as God, appeared not to know His Mother and His filial dependence on Her: "He repulsed her as one unknown," says St. Augustine. In like manner, Priests in the office of their Ministry, in the exercise of their power, recognise no dependence upon Parents, much less on other relations, and hence they may not regulate their actions so as to regard flesh and blood. The sacerdotal dignity raises us above all creatures, so that we depend on the Hierarchy only, for, as St. Chrysostom tells us, no mortal, no Angel, no creature whatsoever, but the Holy Spirit—the Paraclete—has the disposition of Holy Orders. Therefore, if our holy religion commands thee

to do, or to abstain from doing any particular thing, and this is displeasing to thy Parents, remember, says St. Ambrose, that true piety places divine relations before human relations, and prefers things that are eternal to those that are temporal. Moreover, thou art a Minister of the Church, and thou must regard this thy Mother in the office of the Ministry, as dearer and more venerable than any other mother. She alone has authority to regulate the functions of the Ministry by Her canons; every other rule is false, every other motive is sacrilegious. Therefore, says St. Augustine, a heart animated by the true Ecclesiastical Spirit, must be guided by the orders, interests, and needs of the Church, rather than by any other orders, interests, or needs whatsoever. Let us meditate on the force of these reasons; let us deplore the blindness of those Priests who use their power for their families rather than for God, for their parents rather than for the Church. Let us pray to God to preserve us from this error, and, if we have fallen into it in the time past, let us repent and amend.

3. *My hour is not yet come.* In these words our Divine Lord shows His religious regard for that wonderful order which gives beauty to all God's works, and prevents confusion; an order established by the Eternal Father, whose Will He perfectly fulfilled, and to whose Glory He directed all His actions. So St. Chrysostom. This, then, was the first lesson He gave to His disciples who were present at the Marriage Feast, and in their person He gave it to all who are associated with them in the Apostolic Ministry; as likewise, on another occasion, He said to His Brethren, "My time is not yet come" (St. John vii. 6). The instruction which Jesus Christ gives to His Ministers, consists simply in this: to observe the Law of God exactly, to know and to obey the Sacred Canons, to fulfil the duties of their state, and to do all this with that moderation and order which is most conducive to the glory of God and to the good of souls: "Let all things be done decently, and according to order" (1 Cor. xiv. 40). To do everything at its proper time, and, when possible, to give every affair its full time, to profit by the acceptable time, that the grace of God may not be received in vain: "all things have *their season*" (Eccl. iii. 1); "there is a time and opportunity

for every business" (Eccl. viii. 6); "Receive not the grace of God in vain . . . . behold now is the acceptable time" (2 Cor. vi. 2). Let us apply these instructions to ourselves, so that human respect, family affection, and deference to friends, may have no share in the performance of our priestly acts. Let us imitate those excellent priests who have had to endure the opposition of their relatives and have overcome it, and so, guided and assisted by our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall work out our eternal salvation.

"Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently."—*Ps.* cxviii. 4.

"Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, and in this hour look on the works of my hands."—*Judith* xiii. 7.

WEDNESDAY.

THREE THINGS ARE PRESCRIBED TO THE MINISTERS OF THE SANCTUARY.

I. THE FULFILMENT OF THEIR DUTIES.
II. THE PREACHING OF THE WORD.
III. THE MINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS.

"His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them: Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them: Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast."—*St. John* ii. 5—8.

1. *Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.* The Old Testament predicted that our great Mother, Mary, would speak to us, and give us salutary instructions: "forsake not the law of thy Mother" (Prov. i. 8). "Now therefore, ye children, hear me . . . hear instruction . . . blessed is the man that heareth me" (Prov. viii.

32, 33, 34). But up to this time we find that Mary has not spoken to men. The Evangelists have related Her colloquy with the Archangel, Her Canticle of praise to God, the words which She addressed to Her Divine Son, but they have recorded none of Her precepts. It is now that for the first and last time we listen to Her speaking to us, and She says all in four words. Blessed is the man who listens to Her! This is our Mother's law, containing in itself all the perfection of justice; for, says St. Thomas, he who obeys Christ in all things is perfect. Jesus Christ had not yet commenced His preaching; the Eternal Father had not yet caused His Voice to be heard from heaven: "Hear ye him" (St. Matt. xvii. 5); and the Mother of God, anticipating Him, says to us: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." Mark, however, that these words are addressed to the "waiters," who represented the Teachers of the New Testament—Priests, says Alcuin. Therefore we ought to be most exact observers of the Gospel, and of all that Christ commands by His Church or through our superiors; for, better than others, should the Priest fulfil his own duties; his life, says St. Chrysostom, should be stainless and circumspect, so that all may look up to him, and make his life the model of their own. If we preach the observance of the Law to our flock, ought we not first to give them the example of keeping the law? Example, says the Council of Trent, is "a kind of *perpetual* preaching."

2. *Fill the water-pots with water.* What is the signification of those six water-pots, capable of containing two or three measures of water? They signify, says St. Thomas, "the hearts of men, the receptacles of the Scriptures." They signify, as St. Augustine explains them, the human race divided into six ages, and two conditions, Jews and Gentiles, but all descended from the three sons of Noah. God has enjoined His Ministers that they fill men with "the water of wholesome wisdom" (Eccli. xv. 3), and therefore we must not suffer them to die of the thirst, not of water, but "of hearing the word of the Lord" (Amos viii. 11). On the contrary, we ought to use every endeavour that the Faithful may be "replenished with all knowledge," so that they may become *teachers of* others (Rom. xv. 14). Let us use every endeavour,

that by the ministry of the word, the charity of our brethren "may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding" (Phil. i. 9). Let us then flood the hearts of the Faithful with this divine water, let us fill them "to the brim" with sound doctrine, let us not grow weary in so doing, for "in due time we shall reap, not failing" (Gal. vi. 9).

3. *Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward.* St. Thomas sees in these words a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaias, which foretold that a time would come in which they should "draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (xii. 3). Now what are these waters? What are these fountains? St. Ambrose explains them to mean the Sacraments of the Church, whereby the waters are drawn from the Wounds of Christ, as from inexhaustible fountains. Thence flows the water of Grace, of which Jesus Christ said: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink" (St. John vii. 37). These waters, like the water of Cana, grew red, for they are the Blood of Jesus Christ: "they saw . . . the waters red, like blood" (4 Kings iii. 22). Of these waters, of this wine it is written: "All you that thirst, come to the waters . . . come ye, buy wine and milk, without money, and without any price" (Isa. lv. 1). Now to whom is it that Jesus Christ says "draw out now, and carry to the chief steward"? It is to the "waiters," that is, to those whom the Apostle calls "Ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1). It is for us to dispense the wine, under the direction of the Chief Steward, that is, of our Prelates; it is for us to administer the Sacraments, "faithfully, humbly, devoutly, and piously," as St. Lawrence Justinian exhorts us. How many are the obligations which this august ministry carries with it! What an account will Christ require of this divine water, of this wine which issued from the "True Vine," of this Blood shed from His Wounds! What abundant matter for self-examination is there for the Priest, who, knowing the greatness of his office, fears the judgments of God, and will not turn aside from His commandments.

"I have not declined from Thy judgments, because Thou hast set me a law."—*Ps.* cxviii. 102.

"All things that the Lord hath spoken, we will do, we will be obedient."—*Exod.* xxiv. 7.

SECOND THURSDAY.

THE CONSOLATIONS WHEREWITH OUR DIVINE LORD FILLS THOSE WHO HAVE CARE OF SOULS.

I. How joyful they are.

II. How they are prepared.

III. How they are made perfect.

"And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water, the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him: Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse, but thou hast kept the good wine until now."—*St. John* ii. 9, 10.

1. *When the chief steward had tasted the water made wine.* With the Jews, this chief steward was a Priest, who regulated the nuptial banquet; and he is a figure of Prelates and of all who, having cure of souls, regulate all that belongs to the espousal of souls with Jesus Christ, and order the Heavenly Food with which these souls are so sweetly and sumptuously nourished. Moreover, St. Bonaventure says that the Church, of whom the Bishop is the head, is likened by her three orders to the Triclinium, on which the guests reclined at the Banquet. Now what exquisite consolation does not Almighty God give to Bishops, and to all who have cure of souls, when they behold the conversion of sinners, the virtues of the just, the acts of divine worship, the frequentation of the Sacraments, and the diffusion of heavenly light: "I was exceeding glad," said St. John, again and again (ii. 4; iii. 3), when he was consoled by hearing of the holy lives of Christians; and truly there is no other joy worthy of a Christian

but this, as St. Jerome says: "Never be joyful unless you shall see your brethren in charity." The Apostle certainly lied not when he wrote: "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy" (2 Cor. vii. 4); and such consolations are not senseless, momentary, and shameful, like the consolations of the world; but wise, lasting, and glorious, for they proceed from "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation" (2 Cor. i. 3, 4). They are founded in charity towards God and towards our neighbour, for they spring from seeing God glorified, and souls following the way of salvation: "for I have had great joy and consolation in thy charity" (Philemon 7); and they are the priceless effects of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the hearts of holy Prelates, who are "filled with the consolation of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ix. 31).

2. *Every man at first setteth forth good wine.* The Chief Steward must have been grieved to see that the wine failed, while the poverty of the hosts suffered him not to repair it. The wine they had been drinking was of poor quality, such as could not satisfy the guests; but our Divine Lord's miracle recompensed him for the pain he had suffered. In like manner, those who have cure of souls begin by suffering mental anxiety and bodily labour; but let us remember the lamentations of the Apostle, who "was pressed out of measure, above our strength, so that we were weary even of life" (2 Cor. i. 8); let us remember, that he, the pattern of Apostolic men, "suffered . . combats without, fears within" (2 Cor. vii. 5), but as tribulations abounded, "so also by Christ doth our comfort abound" (2 Cor. i. 5). God's ways are the exact opposite of the ways of the men of the world, for they offer us in the first place, good wine, and intoxicate us, afterwards they make us drunk with gall and wormwood: "every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." This, says Cornelius à Lapide, is a true figure of the world's deceit, which at first sets before our eyes all that flatters and delights, but afterwards that which is vile and worst, and thus does it deceive its lovers. The World's wine "goeth in pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake" (Prov. xxiii. *31, 32*).

3. *Thou hast kept the good wine until now.* The consolations which God grants in this present life to holy Pastors, are an earnest of that perfect blessedness which He has prepared for them in Heaven. At first we suffer, nor can that great good be acquired without suffering; but by degrees, as we tread the Apostolic way, our steps will become more free, we shall run without stumbling: "When thou shalt have entered, thy steps shall not be straitened, and when thou runnest, thou shalt not meet a stumbling-block" (Prov. iv. 12). Christ does not bestow the good wine first. He sets before us things which are bitter and hard to do, but He reserves it for the last, when He will bestow on us the fulness of joy. So St. Thomas. In the moment of thy death thou shalt see, O pastor of souls, what consolations He will give thee, if thou hast laboured well in His vineyard; thou shalt have that wine which refreshed Isaac when he was in the hour of death (Gen. xxvii. 25), and thence shalt thou pass to that torrent of pleasures, with which thou shalt be inebriated in heaven (Ps. xxxv. 9); this shall be the "white wine," says St. Bernard, which inebriated Noe and is the reward of the just. Those who labour for the salvation of souls shall have a most glorious place in the Kingdom of God, says the same St. Bernard. True it is that in this present life, and especially in this age, the labours, perils, and difficulties of the Ministry are great, but the good Wine which is reserved for pastors will, says St. Augustine, be ample recompense for all. Let us then reanimate our courage with the hope of future good things, and let us confide in the bounty of our Lord Jesus Christ, who even in His first miracle took such pains to encourage us.

"My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the Face of God?"—*Ps.* xli. 2.

"I have eaten the honeycomb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk."—*Cant.* v. 1.

FRIDAY.

THE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY OUR DIVINE LORD'S MIRACLE IN THE FIRST PRIESTS.

I. IT INITIATED THEM IN THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST.
II. IT SET THEM ON THE ROAD TO GLORY.
III. IT CONFIRMED THEM IN THE TRUE FAITH.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."—*St. John* ii. 11.

1. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus.* The Angelic Doctor teaches, that the miracle of turning the water into wine was performed, not like the other miracles, in favour of the multitude, but in favour of the first Priests. It was then "the beginning of miracles," by which He initiated His Priests in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, wherein they were to change bread and wine into His Body and Blood; thus showing them, says St. Isidore, that by His Blood He would perfect this holy initiation. And so He wrought this miracle by the hands of the waiters, without moving from His place, without any appearance of operation on His part, in order that we might the more easily believe that, by His hidden power, and by the operation of the Holy Spirit, this "Transubstantiation" should be effected by the ministry of His Priests, who have received from Him power and the unction of the Holy Ghost. How great then should be our affection for the Eucharistic Wine, how great our desire to partake of it; how great care should we take not to render ourselves unworthy; since in the very beginning of His public life, our Divine Lord disclosed to us its joys and its effects. Let us say to Him, with a

heart full of love: "Can I forsake my wine, that cheereth God and man?" (Judges ix. 13).

2. *And manifested His glory.* Jesus taught the five Disciples who were present on this occasion, that true glory is obtained and made manifest by humility; and the more Priests exercise themselves in humility, so much the more will Almighty God glorify them. Our Divine Lord appeared at this banquet, in order to give us an example of humility, for having taken the form of a servant, and of a poor servant, He assisted at the marriage of His poor servants, says St. Chrysostom. Let man blush to be proud, for the Son of the Virgin comes to the marriage, says St. Augustine, He who in the Bosom of the Father instituted marriage. But while He exercised humility, He manifested His Divinity, for He did what God alone could do, He changed water into wine, and, in so doing, performed an unheard-of and singular miracle, an astounding miracle, and one which challenged the examination of a crowd of people; and He performed it as Lord and Master of the elements and of nature, by the sole act of His will, without preparation, without ceremony, without invocation, without movement. So Venerable Bede. And, says St. Chrysostom, in this miracle He showed that, as the Uncreated Word created all things, so It changes them as It wills. He showed that He was the same, who, as St. Augustine observes, in creating the vine, gave it power to change the rain into wine, and does this year by year. Jesus Christ manifested His glory, though He sought it not: "I seek not My own glory" (St. John viii. 50), and therefore, whilst He sought His own humiliation, His Father glorified Him: "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing, it is My Father that glorifieth Me" (St. John viii. 54). What a lesson for us! How often has He given it? How little have we profited by it! We seek glory, and we find humiliation: if we sought humiliation, we should find glory.

3. *And His disciples believed in Him.* Probably His disciples already believed Him to be a good man, a holy preacher, the Messias; but, from the time of this miracle, says St. Thomas, they believed Him to be God. Jesus would have these first Priests to *be teachers* and propagators of the Faith; He would have

Christians regard them as their foundation: "built upon the foundation of the Apostles" (Eph. ii. 20); and therefore He would, at the outset, lay this foundation, and consolidate it thoroughly, and then raise the building upon it. What a lesson for us! If we are not strong in the Faith, and full of Faith, we shall execute our Ministry but feebly. St. Cyprian says that Priests must be a living pattern of the Faith to their brethren. Let us preach the Faith, let us keep it in our minds, and from the mind it will descend into the heart. Therefore considering how, from that moment, the Disciples must have regarded their Master, let us consider how we ought to regard Him; what faith we ought to have in His Power, what confidence in His Goodness, what respect for His Person, what desire to render ourselves acceptable to Him, to remain ever united to Him, and to serve Him all the days of our life!

"Blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct, O Lord."—*Ps.* xciii. 12.

"Blessed are Thy servants, who stand before Thee always."—3 *Kings* x. 8.

SECOND SATURDAY.

IN ASSISTING AT THE MARRIAGE IN CANA MARY REPRESENTS THE CHURCH.

I. IN ASSISTING AT THE MARRIAGE.
II. IN PRAYING TO GOD.
III. IN PREACHING TO MEN.

"The Mother of Jesus was there . . . the Mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine . . . His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye."—*St. John* ii. 1, 3, 5.

1. *The Mother of Jesus was there.* The Blessed Virgin represented the Church, and therefore She has been called by Richard of St. Lawrence, and others, "the Church of Christians," "the Church of God." Now "the Mother of Jesus" was at the Marriage in Cana, "and Jesus also was invited." This ought to remind us that the Church was from the beginning of the world, and that, as St. Gregory tells us, the sighs of the Patriarchs and of the Just invited Jesus. The spiritual espousals between God and the soul of man were entered into by faith in the future Messias, and it is to them that the Epithalamium written by Solomon refers. But, under the New Covenant, these espousals are perfected; the Church presides at them; She brings them about; She regulates them; by Her means there is no failure of the wine of charity. She especially watches over the transubstantiation in the Holy Eucharist; She watches over the last passage of the soul to the heavenly consummation of these espousals. So St. Thomas. Hence St. Bernard, meditating on these mysteries, exclaims: "*Whence is this* to thee, O human soul, whence such inestimable

glory to thee, that thou shouldst merit to be the Spouse in that wherein Angels desire to look?" And, whilst the Church on earth assists at these blessed Espousals, and furnishes the Wine by means of Her Ministers, represented by the Waiters at the Marriage feast, the Blessed Virgin in Heaven also assists, for of Her it is written: "After Her shall virgins be brought to the king" (Ps. xliv. 15). What glory for Mary! What consolation for the Church! And that Mary's desires and the desires of the Church may be satisfied, let us employ all our efforts that Divine love, which is the bond of the nuptial union, may inflame our own souls and the souls of others; for what is required between the bridegroom and the bride, says St. Bernard, but to love and be loved?

2. *The Mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine.* If we consider what Mary asked, how She asked, and how She obtained what She asked, we shall recognise in her a noble figure of the Church. In fact, the Church asks nothing else save this Wine, as understood in its various meanings. For sinners, she asks the Wine of compunction; for the Just, the Wine of fervour. She asks for all Her children, that the Lord would bring them "into His store-rooms," that they may "be glad and rejoice in Him" (Cant. i. 3); that He would bring them "into the cellar of wine, and set up in order charity in their hearts" (Cant. ii. 4). She asks for them the Holy Eucharist, which is the end of all the Sacraments, and which gives them to taste of spiritual sweetness in its very fountain, says St. Thomas. She asks for them that river of most delicious Wine which, says St. Bernard, makes the heart glad, even as the river which maketh glad the City of God. Now the Church, like Mary, asks all this for men without their entreating Her, because She is their tender Mother; and, in imitation of Mary, She asks with confidence in the Divine bounty, without anxiety, setting forth only the need, as the Apostle says: "Let your petitions be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6). Finally, Almighty God grants Her requests, although He may appear to reject them, even as He seemed to repulse Mary. Observe, too, that the name "Woman" is given alike to Mary and to the Church (Apoc. xii. 1), and that the prayer of the one and of the other obtains grace, even though the "hour be not come," for the mercy

of Jesus not unfrequently anticipates prayer (Ps. lxxviii. 8). Meanwhile let us, Priests, reflect that we are the Ministers of public prayer, and if, in offering it to God in the name of the Church, we imitate Mary and implore Her powerful intercession, we shall be heard. Let us ponder these great truths and profit by them.

3. *Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.* By these words Mary proclaimed the Divinity of Her Son, for, as St. Thomas explains, such words apply only to God, since every mere man may err. These words contain the whole of the Church's preaching, and this is the substance of it: Christ is God. He has said: "Believe in the light, that you may be the children of light" (St. John xii. 36). Obey then, believe in God, and what He commands "do ye." Jesus Christ is God. He has said: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world" (St. John xvi. 38). Obey then, hope in Him; as He commands, "do ye." Christ is God. He has said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c." (St. Matt. xxii. 37—39). Obey then, keep charity alive, and, according as He has commanded, "do ye." So shall you have eternal life: "This do, and thou shalt live" (St. Luke x. 28). Let us beseech the Blessed Virgin, that, as She represented the preaching of the Church, so She would render it efficacious from our lips, that our hearers may fulfil the will of God which we declare to them, and that we ourselves may give them an example of so doing.

"As a child that is weaned is towards his mother, so reward in my soul."—*Ps.* cxxx. 2.

"Thou instructest me, O my Mother."—*Prov.* xxxi. 1.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

HOW WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES FOR PREACHING.

I. By descending to the capacity of our hearers.

II. By first ascending to the mystical mountain.

III. By endeavouring that the multitudes may follow us.

"And when Jesus was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him."—*St. Matt.* viii. 1.

1. *When Jesus was come down.* The Angelic Doctor teaches, that Jesus Christ, in coming down from the mountain to preach to the multitudes, shadowed forth two things. First, that He had come down from Heaven, which is called "the mountain in which God dwells" (Ps. lxvii. 17), and that He had lowered Himself even to the condition of a servant, to teach other servants their Master's will. Secondly, that on the mountain He explained to his Disciples "the height of doctrine," which in the Psalms (xxxv. 7) is also compared to a mountain; but, descending thence, He adapted His discourse to the capacity of the multitudes who were in the plain. As St. Ambrose says, multitudes will not follow a Preacher whose words are lofty; nor can they raise themselves to the understanding of a too elevated style. And so has our Saviour taught preachers to adapt themselves to the capacity of their hearers, and to make use of thoughts and language suitable to the intelligence and profit of each one. Hence all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, in giving directions for preaching, have vehemently insisted on this great truth. St. Gregory says that the language of

the Teacher must be adapted to the capacity of his audience, so as to strike home to each one singly, without departing from the common edification. Christian preaching has no need of a sensuous and exquisite style, for, says St. Ambrose, the truth of the doctrine is its recommendation.

2. *From the mountain.* The mountain reminds us of three sublime things, to all of which the Minister of the Word must rise, in order to prepare himself for preaching the Word. "The mountain" signifies the Church, which is called "the Mountain of the House of the Lord, prepared on the top of mountains" (Isa. ii. 2). Here should the Priest tarry to learn his doctrine, to realise his vocation, that, being sent by God, he may obtain a blessing. Heretical missionaries of these and former times "go round about the sea and land to make one proselyte" (St. Matt. xxiii. 15), but they convert none, because they come not from the mountain—they are not sent by the Church. Again, "the mountain" signifies greatness and eminence in justice, according to St. Augustine. If the Priest does not rise by sanctity above his flock, if he is not solidly founded in virtue like a mountain, if he is not that good odour of Christ which is acquired "upon the mountains of aromatical spices" (Cant. viii. 14), he will scarcely be followed by the multitudes, who would fain say to the preacher: "We will run after thee, to the odour of thy ointments" (Cant. i. 3). Lastly, "the mountain" signifies prayer, which St. Augustine defines to be "the raising up of the mind to God." God has chosen to work great mysteries upon Mountains: the Ark rested on a Mountain; the sacrifice of Abraham was offered on a Mountain; the law was given on a Mountain; Our Saviour began His preaching on a Mountain, He was transfigured upon a Mountain, He expired upon a Mountain, He appeared when risen again to five hundred Disciples at once upon a Mountain, He ascended from a Mountain. All this denotes that the mysteries of salvation must first be contemplated in elevation of spirit, and then announced to the multitude. Therefore let Priests make use of holy meditation and mental prayer before they begin to preach.

3. *Great multitudes followed Him.* These multitudes followed Jesus, and in all ages multitudes have followed great preachers of

the Gospel. And why was it that this great multitude had recourse to Him? Origen answers: "Some, because of His charity, many, because of His teaching, a few, because of His healing." Therefore if we would have multitudes follow us, that we may lead them to God, to holiness, to Paradise, let us endeavour to provide ourselves with the same attractions. The first is, "because of His Charity." Yes, let us study the properties of this virtue, let us clothe ourselves with the bowels of Jesus Christ, let us imitate His behaviour; He was not sad, nor troublesome; He rebuked none, nor did He drive away the poor to receive the rich; He did not make His voice heard in the street, He had compassion on the weak, He rekindled the embers of charity in the hearts of the tepid (Isaias xlii. 2, 4). Hence the first requisite to attract the multitude is the sweetness of charity. The next is *because of His teaching.* Let our sermons be learned, clear, full of unction, in imitation of Him who attracted the multitudes by "the words of grace that proceeded from His mouth" (St. Luke iv. 22). The Faithful flock to the pulpit of the Priest who instructs them and draws them to good. Lastly, let us endeavour to cure the infirmities of others, and the Faithful will hasten to us "for healing." For this end, it is not necessary to perform visible miracles, it suffices to work such as are invisible—that is, to cure spiritual maladies by converting sinners, and administering the Sacraments to them. These miracles soon become public by the change of life in those who are converted, and which cannot be hidden. But, on the other hand, be careful, O Priest, not to follow the multitude to theatres, amusements, banquets, and vanities, which but ill correspond with thy state: "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil" (Ex. xxiii. 2), but make the multitude follow thee, for the profit of thine own soul and the souls of others.

"I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, in a great Church, I will praise Thee in a strong people."—*Ps.* xxxiv. 18.

"Draw me: we will run after Thee in the odour of Thy ointments."—*Cant.* i. 3.

THIRD MONDAY.

THE WICKED PRIEST.

I. He is full of leprosy.
II. He rarely humbles himself.
III. He mocks God by his very prayers.

"And behold a leper came and adored Him, saying: Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."—*St. Matt.* viii. 2.

1. *And behold a leper.* In this Leper, the Holy Fathers recognise the figure of a sinner, and as leprosy is infectious, He represents in an especial manner the sinner who infects others. Now who more than a wicked Priest may be regarded as full of leprosy, and that of the most contagious kind? The sin of a layman is grievous, but far more grievous is the sin of a Priest, says St. Isidore; and the more glorious is our dignity, the more shameful is this leprosy in us, says St. Hilarion. And since the very administration of the Sacraments multiplies the sins of a wicked Priest, and so that his iniquity increases daily, he is, as it were, full of an incurable leprosy. And how contagious is this plague, for, says St. Gregory, no one is so hurtful to the Church as he who, living wickedly, has the name and dignity of Order; and St. Bernard says, that corrupt Priests trail throughout the land a fatal poison which infects many of the members of the Church. O my God, deliver me from so terrible a calamity; cut me off in the midst of my days rather than that I should fall into it, and if unhappily I have fallen, heal my sickness in Thine Omnipotent *mercy.*

2. *Came and adored Him.* This Leper, says Origen, before he asked for cure, prostrated himself at our Saviour's feet, humbled himself, and adored Him. St. Thomas explains the signification of this to be, that the sinner must come to Jesus by faith, but must adore Him by humility. This is rarely done by a wicked Priest; he is ashamed to present himself before a Confessor as a culprit, who has so often filled the place of judge. The eminence of their rank, and the impunity which it affords, make most wicked Priests proud: "therefore pride hath held them fast: they are covered with their iniquity and their wickedness" (Ps. lxxii. 6). Now there are three things which individually God hates, and much more will He abhor a soul in which all these three are found; these are: "a poor man that is proud, a rich man that is a liar, an old man that is a fool" (Eccli. xxv. 4). These three things are united in a sinful Priest, who is proud in his poverty, he being deprived of heavenly treasures, who is a liar in the riches of his dignity, he professing a sanctity of which he is destitute, and who is a fool and idiot, though reputed venerable as an elder among the people. On the contrary, "God will save the humble of spirit" (Ps. xxxiii. 9). Grant me, O my God, the humble and contrite heart, which Thou dost not despise nor exclude from Thy pardon.

3. *Saying: Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.* By this prayer, so full of faith, confidence, and humility, the Leper offered to the spiritual physician a spiritual recompense, for as physicians expect money for curing the sick, so Christ expects prayer in order to cure sinners. But the wicked Priest will not pray for his conversion, and when he prays at Holy Mass, and in the Divine Office, he insults God, instead of appeasing Him and imploring His pardon: for he "honoureth" Him with his "lips, but" his "heart is far from" Him (St. Matt. xv. 8). St. Basil makes the following reflection on the words of the Psalm (xxix. 5): "Sing to the Lord, O ye His saints," that Psalmody befits the lips only of the pure of heart. God grant that we may never fall into this state! God grant that we may never remain in it through want of humiliation and prayer! And if, because of hidden sins, we should even now be such in God's sight, let us implore Him to heal us quickly, not

to leave us impenitent, for "the perverse are hard to be corrected" (Eccl. i. 15).

"O Lord, be Thou merciful to me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee."—*Ps.* xl. 5.

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."—*St. Matt.* viii. 2.

TUESDAY.

HOW EASILY PRIESTS ARE INFECTED BY THE LEPROSY OF OTHERS.

I. By touching the leprous.
II. By glorying in their cure of the leprous.
III. They finally find themselves leprous.

"And Jesus, stretching forth His hand, touched him, saying: I will, be thou made clean. And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith to him: See thou tell no man: but go, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."—*St. Matt.* viii. 3, 4.

1. *And Jesus, stretching forth His hand, touched him.* The infection of leprosy was so easy and dangerous, that Almighty God severely forbade all contact with it, and the Leper was separated from intercourse with his fellow men (Levit. xiii. 2). Our Saviour, to show that His Sacred Flesh could not be infected by any contagion, and that therefore the end of the law had no place in regard to Him, touched the sufferer, and by His touch healed him. Further, He would show us, says St. Chrysostom, that we, entering into the spirit of the law, should fear contact with another leprosy, the leprosy of the soul, which is sin; and the contagion of sin is truly formidable to whoever has the light of Faith. These Lepers will present themselves to us Priests, and we must

approach them, and touch their sores with the hand of charity even although these sores may be "putrified and corrupted" (Ps. xxxvii. 6). We ought to possess the virtue of Christ, if we would not contract this formidable malady, and we must fervently invoke it lest we be contaminated. We should have the Hand of Christ, which, says Venerable Bede, could not be contaminated. He touched the Leper to show that He was not subject to the law, says St. Chrysostom; and we likewise have need of exemption from that general rule: "He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with it." What wonder, then, if many unwary Priests have lost innocence and modesty by contact with their penitents? With how many stains in body and soul have they defiled themselves? Let us pray that we ourselves may not lose peace of conscience and eternal life in striving to obtain these benefits for others.

2. *See thou tell no man.* Our Saviour desired the Leper whom He had healed not to make known the grace he had received, adding, as we read in St. Mark, a threat to this command: "He strictly charged him" (i. 44). By this He would teach us not to yield to vainglory in the healing of sinners, but to give all the glory to God. So St. Chrysostom. If the Priest does not act thus, if he takes complacency in what he has done, attributing it to his words or to his labours, if, under some pretext suggested by pride, he boasts of it and seeks for praise, the leprosy of the patient will cleave to the physician, says St. Ambrose, for humility alone can prevent infection, and this was wanting in him. If only from regard to the Seal of Confession, we should never divulge, but rather conceal the benefits we have conferred on sinners by the divine power of the Keys, that we may show, says St. Ambrose again, that we expect no earthly reward, not even the thanks or favour of the faithful. Have we hitherto profited by this teaching? Have we been guilty of acts of self-complacency and vainglory? Let us question our consciences carefully, and ponder this matter.

3. *Go, shew thyself to the Priest.* The Mosaic Law, by commanding Lepers to show themselves to the Priest, showed that there was no fear that the Priest should be infected thereby; but the Priest could not cure them, he could only "discern between

leper and leper," and admit such as were healed to intercourse with their fellow-citizens. The Priest of the New Covenant not only judges of the leprosy, but also immediately cures it, says St. Chrysostom. How then can he himself be leprous? How can we suppose that Lepers will present themselves to him if they see, even in his exterior, the traces of this plague? If they see "the leprosy in his forehead" (2 Par. xxvi. 20) will they not say, "Physician, heal thyself" (St. Luke iv. 23)? Oh, that such a case had never been—might never be! What tears are sufficient to weep for a Confessor who labours in curing others while he neglects himself? His leprosy will increase until it covers him (Numb. xii. 10). He commits as many sacrileges as he administers Sacraments, being in mortal sin, says St. Ambrose. Let us pray to God that we may never fall into such blindness, and that He would set free those who suffer from it.

"Preserve me, O Lord, for I have put my trust in Thee."—*Ps.* xv. 1.

"Suffer not, O Lord, that Thy servant be defiled."—*Judith* xiii. 20.

WEDNESDAY.

HE CURE OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT A CONDEMNATION OF INDOLENT PRIESTS.

I. THE CHARITY OF THE CENTURION.
II. THE CONDITION OF THE SERVANT.
III. THE CONDESCENSION OF JESUS.

'And when He had entered into Capharnaum, there came to Him a nturion, beseeching Him, and saying: Lord, my servant lieth at home sick the palsy, and is grievously tormented. And Jesus saith to him: I will ne and heal him. . . . Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to e. And his servant was healed at the same hour."—*St. Matt.* viii. 5, 7, 13.

1. *There came to him a Centurion.* This Centurion was a Cap- n, and had soldiers under his orders, so that he fitly represented m whom St. Hilary calls "Prince among the combatants." Such : Priests in the Church Militant, and they constitute the divine diery, says St. Leo. Thus ordered, the Church appears "ter- le as an army set in array" (Cant. vi. 3). If the Centurion ame to Jesus," we have already drawn near to Him as His unsellors, as His aides-de-camp in that great battle in which He supreme Commander. So Peter of Blois. Why, then, do we t speak to Him in behalf of the sick! Why do we not take : Centurion for our model? If we had as much zeal for the vation of others as he had for the cure of his servant, in how ich better condition would poor sinners be! How many would urn to God! St. Bonaventure declares that the wonderful ect of the Priest's prayer for the remission of other men's sins clearly expressed by the successful issue of the Centurion's

request, and he quotes this passage: "The priest shall pray for him, and for his sin" (Lev. v. 6). He considers it also to be a figure of the great benefit which zealous Priests bring to the sick in the administration of Extreme Unction, for "the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him" (St. James v. 15). If we do not act thus, shall not the Centurion be one of the judges who will condemn us? "He shall rise in judgment, and condemn us" (St. Matt. xii. 41).

2. *Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented.* This servant is an image of the sinner, especially of him who sins from frailty, as St. Thomas explains it. He was a servant, and he who sins "is the servant of sin" (St. John viii. 34) and of the Devil. He lay so that he could not move his limbs, and was tormented by grievous pain: he thus represents the state of guilty souls, who cannot stand upright, nor make a single step towards heaven, who are tormented by remorse of conscience and fear of God's chastisements. So St. Hilary. Now if the Centurion had compassion on his wretched servant, imploring the intercession of the Ancients of the Jews, and himself going to entreat Jesus, will he not form the condemnation of indolent Priests, who have no compassion on souls rotting in sin and hurrying to eternal death? Is the body more deserving of succour than the soul? St. Luke points out the motive which urged the Centurion to do so much for his servant: "He was dear to him" (vii. 2). He knew his worth, he valued him according to his deserts, and therefore he spared no pains to save his life. We, too, ought to know how "precious is the soul of a man" (Prov. vi. 26). We ought to remember at what price God has bought it, "for you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver . . . but with the Precious Blood" (1 Peter i. 18). If we pondered these considerations, we could not be indolent about the miserable state of sinners, and to us the salvation of a man would be "more precious than gold, yea . . . than the finest gold" (Isa. xiii. 12).

3. *I will come and heal him.* Here meditate on the kindness, *the goodness,* the readiness of our Saviour in receiving the Cen-

turion's request, and, as St. Chrysostom shows, doing more than he asked. He promised all without delay, says St. Jerome; and so gives us to understand, as St. Thomas explains, how pleasing to Him, and how readily granted, are prayers made for others. Hence St. Ambrose charges the sinner to employ intercessors to obtain the pardon of his sins. And what excuse shall we have if we do not pray for sinners? How many would have come to Jesus, by His grace, and through the Holy Eucharist, if we, like Moses, had lifted up our hands to heaven to obtain their pardon.

"Return, O Lord, how long? and be entreated in favour of Thy servants."—*Ps.* lxxxix. 13.

"Be appeased upon the wickedness of Thy people."—*Exod.* xxxii. 12.

THURSDAY.

HOW A GOOD PRIEST CONFESSES HIMSELF UNWORTHY BEFORE ADMINISTERING TO HIMSELF THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST.

I. By the remembrance of his sins.
II. By the knowledge of himself.
III. By faith in Jesus Christ.

"And the Centurion, making answer, said: Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof: but only say the word and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers, and I say to this, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. And Jesus, hearing this, marvelled, and said to them: I have not found so great faith in Israel."—*St. Matt.* viii. 8—10.

1. *I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof.* In inviting us to partake of the Divine Mysteries, the Church makes us imitate Zacheus, who received Jesus into his house "with

joy" (St. Luke xix. 6); but, at the same time, She would have us imitate the Centurion, and say, with him, "Lord, I am not worthy;" for, says Origen, when thou eatest and drinkest the Body and Blood of the Lord, then the Lord enters beneath thy roof. And in administering It both to ourselves and to others, She makes us repeat these words thrice, that we may call to mind the sins whereby we have offended the Majesty of our Creator, by the abuse of His natural gifts; the Wisdom of our Redeemer, by despising His Gospel; and the Goodness of the Sanctifier, by profaning the sacerdotal unction. Let us then, as St. Jerome exhorts us, after the example of the Centurion, excite in ourselves a true humility, which shall make us acknowledge ourselves unworthy of being visited by Jesus. The Council of Trent desires Priests to approach the celebration of this sacrifice with the greatest possible purity and cleanness of heart. But do we find this purity of conscience in ourselves? Or should we not rather repeat those words of St. Peter: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (St. Luke v. 8)? Let us at least remember that the Liturgy prescribes the washing of our hands, whereby we should understand that we ought to wash away all iniquity from the hands of our soul with tears, cleansing them from all iniquity, says St. Cyril, before we presume to touch the Flesh of the Lamb.

2. *I am a man subject to authority.* Who are we that we should dare, not only to call down God from Heaven, and hold Him in our hands, but also to make Him our food? We are men subject not only to the authority of the Lord our God, but subject also to other men. We are indeed nothing, and if we did but know our own nothingness, we should be humble; it is our ignorance of it which makes us proud. St. Thomas of Villanova says that the root of humility is self-knowledge; the root of pride, ignorance of oneself; and St. Chrysostom tells us to think of our nature, our formation, our miseries, and this will suffice to keep us within our proper limits, within the bounds of duty. At least, when we hold in our hands, when we take into our mouths, when we receive into ourselves the God of Infinite Majesty and Purity, let us reflect with St. Lawrence Justinian, that we are formed out of all that is

vile, earth and dust and ashes, of impure, unclean blood; in the lust of the flesh, in the heat of desire, in the frenzy of excess, and what is worse, in the stain of sin, and subject to its punishment. Consider that the more thou shalt abase thyself in thy nothingness, the nearer will Jesus Christ approach to thee; the more thou exaltest thyself, the further will Jesus Christ withdraw Himself from thee, says St. Augustine.

3. *I have not found so great faith in Israel.* If the Priest who would be just must live by faith, he must revive his faith by feeding on Jesus. God esteems faith, He marvels at faith, says Origen, that is in the sense in which God can be said to marvel. "He marvelled," in order to teach us, says St. Augustine, to admire and esteem what the Lord admired. This faith will awaken within us a holy fear, a profound reverence in celebrating Mass: "When we enter on the solemn action of the Mass," says Venerable Bede, "let us fulfil the heavenly office with fear and fitting veneration." How is it that we see laymen assisting at the Sacred Mysteries with greater faith, devotion, and fervour than the Priest who is celebrating? When Jesus Christ beholds the faith and piety of some poor woman, who communicates in the midst of a careless Clergy, will He not say, "I have not found so great Faith in My Clergy," as He formerly said, "I have not found so great Faith in Israel," when He would reprove the lesser degree of faith in the Apostles who surrounded Him? Recollect thyself, then, O Priest, and when, says St. Chrysostom, thou beholdest a God come to thee, into thy hands, adore Him profoundly, stand amazed at His infinite condescension, and raise thy mind to His infinite Majesty.

"See my abjection and my labour, and forgive me all my sins."—*Ps.* xxiv. 18.

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof."—*St. Matt.* viii. 8.

THIRD FRIDAY.

THE PUNISHMENT OF WICKED PRIESTS.

I. THEIR DARKNESS.
II. THEIR WEEPING.
III. THEIR MADNESS.

"And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—*St. Matt.* viii. 11, 12.

I. *Shall be cast out into the exterior darkness.* Priests who have fallen, or shall hereafter fall into hell, will feel acutely the punishment of darkness. As Christians, they were "children of the light" (Eph. v. 8); as Priests, they were destined to be the very "light" itself, investing and forming the children of the light; "you are the light of the world" (St. Matt. v. 14); they had represented Him "that was the True Light, which enlighteneth every man" (St. John i. 9); in short, they were chosen, as St. Chrysostom says, to be luminaries, capable of drawing the whole world to the heavenly light. Now will these miserable men find themselves subject as slaves to the "powers of darkness, to the rulers of the world of this darkness" (Eph. vi. 12); yea, they will find themselves plunged in a deep midst, in a whirlwind of torments, which yet will not disperse the darkness: "to whom the mist of darkness is reserved" (2 Pet. ii. 17), "to whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever" (Jude 13). For the fire of hell, kindled by God's omnipotence, and regulated by His justice, has five incomprehensible properties, thus described by St. Thomas. This fire cleaves not only to the body, but to the soul also; it *punishes* each one according to his deserts; it burns without

interruption, without diminution, without being consumed; it does not exempt the damned from the torment of cold; and it affords them no ray of light. Wicked Priests are plunged in this darkness, but they never for a single moment lose sight of the bright heavenly city where they too might have shone in the midst of the Angels of Light, by the splendour of their character, and of their merits; whilst, on the contrary, they find themselves totally and eternally banished from the presence of that God who is "all Light, and in Whom is no darkness." These considerations should make us tremble; and that we may escape this fatal experience let us exercise ourselves in works of mercy, for "alms . . . will not suffer the soul to go into darkness" (Tobias iv. 11). Let us follow Jesus, walking in the light, and letting our "light shine before men" (St. Matt. v. 16).

2. *There shall be weeping.* The weeping of lost Priests will be far more bitter than the weeping of mere laymen, for, says St. Thomas, "weeping declares pain," and far more bitter will their pain be; their mind will be intently fixed on their torments; for, says St. Thomas, they will be tortured by the consideration of the evil they have committed, and for which they are damned, and of the good which they have lost. Among the greatest torments of reprobate Priests will be the thought of so many of their companions already in the Kingdom of Heaven, the thought of the numerous souls for whom they have procured eternal happiness, by the Holy Sacrifice, by the Sacraments, by their preaching; by the thought of the numbers of inferior condition, come from barbarous lands, "from the east and the west," whilst they dwell, and shall for ever dwell, among adulterers, murderers, and infidels: "Behold my servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, and you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for grief of spirit" (Isa. lxv. 14). Their weeping will be the greater also because of the graver nature of their sin: "with a double destruction destroy them" (Jer. xvii. 18). The benefits they have received from God, the clear light which they have abused, the sublimity of the state from which they have fallen, the perdition of other men which they have caused, will prove the truth of that grand sentence of St. Augustine: Nothing is more miserable, wicked, and damnable

in God's sight than for Bishops, Priests, and Deacons carelessly to perform their functions.

3. *And gnashing of teeth.* This noise shows the rage of the damned, for "shrieks pertain to rage," says St. Thomas; punished by God, despairing of blessedness, with the mind ever intently fixed on the eternity of their punishment, they give themselves to inconceivable fury; they hate their inexorable Judge, they curse Him perpetually, and, with impotent desire, would fain hurl Him from His Throne: "the wicked shall see, and shall be angry, he shall gnash with his teeth, and pine away, the desire of the wicked shall perish" (Ps. cxi. 10). Their rage will be nourished perpetually by the struggle between their powerless will and the efficacious Will of God; "ever desiring what shall never be, ever hating what shall ever be." So does St. Bernard describe the rage of the damned. This fury will be incomparably more terrible in Priests, because they are adorned with the indelible character of the Priesthood, which unites them to Jesus Christ, their Judge and their Punisher, Who makes the greatness of their prerogatives the measure of their torments, without regard to their hatred and their despair. Looking upon God in the effect of His Justice, which is punishment, they hate Him as they do the punishment. The more sublime has been their dignity, says St. Isidore, the greater excess of punishment will they suffer; and yet all this is but a small part of their torments, on account of which Jesus Christ said of Judas—the first among lost Priests—"it were better for him if that man had not been born" (St. Matt. xxvi. 24). Let us meditate on this misery that we may fear it, and let us use our utmost endeavours that we may not suffer it eternally. Alas! how many Priests fall into Hell for want of meditating on Hell!

"Take not away my soul, O God, with the wicked."—*Ps.* xxv. 9.

"For hell shall not confess to Thee, neither shall death praise Thee."—*Isaias* xxxviii. 18.

SATURDAY.

PRIESTS SHOULD ASK FOR THREE GRACES ON THE FESTIVAL OF THE ESPOUSALS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, THAT THEY MAY HOLILY CONDUCT THEMSELVES WITH PERSONS OF THE OPPOSITE SEX.

I. THAT THEY MAY OBTAIN THE NECESSARY AIDS.
II. THAT THEY MAY NOT BLEMISH PURITY.
III. THAT THEY MAY RETAIN THEIR GOOD NAME.

"When as His Mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, &c. . . . Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife. . . . And she shall bring forth a Son."—*St. Matt.* i. 18, 20, 21.

1. *When as His Mother Mary was espoused to Joseph.* One of the reasons for which the Divine Wisdom decreed that Mary should have a husband, was, to give Her a support in Her future tribulations; that she might have a support in her flight into Egypt, says St. Jerome. Therefore was Joseph called by the Evangelist, "Her husband," because he was a man of virtue, says St. Bernard, and that the Blessed Virgin might have the protection of a man, says St. Thomas. He was adorned with every virtue, and especially with those which were most necessary to make him the support and companion of the Virgin. Now we Priests are sometimes obliged to receive help from persons of the other sex, and to live with them. Women followed our Saviour, "and ministered to Him" (St. Mark xv. 41) on His journeys, and the Apostles made use of the services of women, whom St. Paul calls "Sisters" (1 Cor. ix. 5). Hence it is a gift of God, if a secular

Priest has a pious sister, or a prudent woman of the canonical age, who can relieve him of domestic cares, and leave him free for the office of the Ministry. But, alas! a wicked man may often be less hurtful than a benevolent woman: "better is the iniquity of a man, than a woman doing a good turn" (Eccli. xlii. 14), for the cunning of the Devil makes use of fraudulent convenience, and feigned assistance, in order to ruin us, says St. Cyprian. Therefore let us implore the Blessed Virgin to obtain the grace for us which She has obtained for so many Priests.

2. *Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife.* So said the Angel to Joseph, in order that he might certify the Virginity of Mary, and bear witness to it, says St. Bernard. Our blessed Lady's virginity received not the slightest stain from this companionship, for She held the sceptre of virginity, because in it She conceived the King of chastity, says St. Augustine. The words of the Angel did but serve to render the chaste Joseph more cautious, so that he might treat his spouse with greater veneration and modesty. Therefore, let us implore of this highly favoured Virgin and Mother, the grace never to stain our purity by intercourse with persons of the other sex; and this grace is truly miraculous, for, says St. Bernard, is it not as great a miracle to be always with women, and not to know women, as to raise the dead? St. Jerome says that if you put tinder to the fire it will burn; and so let us meditate on the necessity of shielding our frailty from the darts which the Devil launches against us by means of women, whom St. Bernard calls "the arms of the Devil, the bow of the Devil hurling darts, the sword of the Devil, the army in which the Devil raises his standard." Let us confide in Mary, who was a Spouse and Mother, but, says Origen, an Immaculate Mother, an uncorrupt Mother, an inviolate Mother. Let us ask this grace on this festival, and we shall easily obtain it.

3. *And She shall bring forth a Son.* Had Mary brought forth Her Son without being a Spouse, the Jews would have stoned Her as an adulteress, says St. Jerome; therefore, by holy Espousals, Almighty God prepared Her for this birth. For, says St Ambrose, Christ had rather that, by reason of these Espousals, some might doubt as to His conception being the work of the Holy Ghost,

than that any should doubt His Mother's chastity. And so when we commemorate this great favour which God bestowed upon Mary, let us ask Her to preserve our good name in so far as it is necessary for us to be profitable Ministers of Holy Church. By intercourse and conversation with women, we run grave risk of losing the good opinion of the Faithful, and so rendering ourselves unfit for the functions of our Ministry; and these women also may become suspected. So St. Cyprian. St. Jerome says that all—the rudest and lowest of the people—suppose they have the right to think and speak ill of us; and although the Priest may preserve his chastity under these circumstances, he can rarely preserve his good name. Hence we must have recourse to Mary; She will either enable us to avoid this intercourse altogether, or at least make it so orderly, prudent, and holy, "that he who is on the contrary part, may be afraid, having no evil to say of us" (Tit. ii. 8). How much remorse of conscience, how much sorrow, how many offences against God, should we avoid! Sad is the condition of the Priest who does not implore Mary's intercession amid these perils. Blessed is he who confides in Her!

"Grant that I may walk in the innocence of my heart, in the midst of my house."—*Ps.* c. 2.

"Free me . . . from the oppression of the flame which surrounded me, and in the midst of the fire I was not burnt."—*Eccles.* li. 6.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

THE MYSTICAL BOAT.

I. WHY A BOAT REPRESENTS THE CHURCH.
II. HOW JESUS IS FOUND THEREIN.
III. WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF PRIESTS THEREIN.

"When Jesus entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him."—*St. Matt.* viii. 23.

1. *Into the boat.* This Boat, says St. Thomas, is a figure of the Church. This is "the little wood, to which men trust their" souls, and in it, "passing over the perilous sea" of this World, "are saved" from eternal shipwreck (Wisd. xiv. 5). Jesus Christ speaks from this Ship, because the Church makes us hear the voice of Her Spouse; from this Ship is taken the immense draught of souls, which fills the fishermen themselves with astonishment (St. Luke v. 3, 7); this Ship alone reaches "the land of the living," towards which we "are going" (St. John vi. 21); and it reaches this Land laden with rich merchandise, brought from distant countries: "she is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her bread from afar" (Prov. xxxi. 14). Since the time that she was navigated by the Apostles and directed by God with the Breath of the Holy Spirit, She sails over every sea, and buys men with the Precious Blood of Christ, to conduct them to their Heavenly Country. Let us thank God, that, without any merit of ours, in preference to so many unhappy unbelievers, He has placed us in this Boat. Let us pray to Him to keep us in It, along with all *those* who are already there, and that He would deign to receive

into It those who are ignorant of It, and even those who raise the tempest against It, and would fain see It founder.

2. *Jesus entered.* Jesus Christ, says St. Chrysostom, knew well how to strengthen the Mystical Boat, before He confided It to the sea of this World; and what were the means devised by His infinite love to strengthen It, and render It superior to all perils? He promised that He Himself would be with those who sail therein, even to the end of their voyage: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). He will ever be our *Emmanuel*, "which, being interpreted, is, God with us" (St. Matt. i. 23). How can we have any fear then about our sailing, if we have God with us? To each one of us may be repeated what the Angel said to Gideon: "The Lord is with thee, O most valiant of men" (Judges vi. 22). Of what can the Church be afraid, of what can I, Her Minister, unworthy though I am, be afraid, if Thou, O Jesus, art with us? "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me" (Ps. xxii. 4). Thou didst promise the Jews in a figure, Thou hast promised Christians in very deed, "to walk among them," to accompany them in their journeyings, "to be their God" (Lev. xxvi. 12), "to dwell in them" (2 Cor. vi. 16). Thy promises are unfailing, nay, Thou ever performest more than Thou hast promised, and therefore we trust that "the God of our salvation will make our journey prosperous" (Ps. lxvii. 20).

3. *And His disciples followed Him.* As faithful Christians, we are all in the Ship, but, as St. Augustine teaches us, we have not all the same occupation. Some labour in it, and these are Priests, others are carried in it, and these are laymen, but we are all alike exposed to the perils of the whirlwind, we shall all alike be saved if we reach the shore. We labour in this Ship in the interests of the greatest of all commerce: "doing business in the great waters" (Ps. cvi. 23); and in this same Ship are they who steer it, "sitting at the helm," says St. Augustine, and these are the Pastors of the Church, to whom it belongs to maintain good order and discipline, which, as the Roman Clergy wrote to St. Cyprian, is as the helm of the Ship in tempests. Ordinary Priests are the rowers, for this

is a "ship with oars" (Isa. xxxiii. 21), and truly, the laborious Ministry of the Word is for nought else but to urge men to the shore, and the administration of the Sacraments is itself a work, to set forward the Faithful on the road to their Heavenly Country. Nor can we fear that the same misfortune should befall our Ship as befell that of Tyre, whose rowers "brought her into great waters; the south wind hath broken her in the heart of the sea" (Ezech. xxvii. 26). All we have to fear is, lest we fail in our duty by refusing to work, or by working ill. Let us pray to the Lord for strength and perseverance in order that we may find rest, riches, and glory on the eternal shore.

"Bring us to the haven of Thy will."—*Ps.* cvi. 30.

"Until this Thy people pass by, which Thou hast possessed: Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thy inheritance."—*Exodus* xv. 16, 17.

MONDAY.

THE MYSTICAL TEMPESTS OF THE CHURCH.

I. WHAT THEY ARE.
II. WHO CAUSES THEM.
III. WHENCE THEY SPRING.

"And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but He was asleep."—*St. Matt.* viii. 24.

1. *And behold a great tempest arose in the sea.* Who would suppose that a voyage undertaken by command of the Saviour of the world could become dangerous? And who would be afraid of the Mystical Ship, the work of God's hands, honoured by His presence, guided by Him, being subject to the perils of the storm? Yet so it is. St. Thomas says that this first tempest, described *in the Gospel,* is but a type of the rest. Our Saviour chose to

exercise His disciples like athletes, in order to render them intrepid amid the future perils of the Church, which they were to govern: "champions of the whole world, whom He was to discipline," says St. Chrysostom. The Bark of Peter has been exposed, times without number, to the most tremendous tempests, and has seemed on the very point of being engulphed by the waves. At one time It has seemed about to be destroyed by the sword, at another to be submerged by error, now to be ruined by evil deeds, now crushed by schism, again, annihilated by worldly policy. And yet It lives, It prosecutes Its voyage, It cannot suffer shipwreck; for, says St. Ambrose, on the Mast, that is, on the Cross, Christ is raised up, the Eternal Father sits at the stern, and the prow is guided by the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. God, Who "bringeth forth winds out of His stores" (Ps. cxxxiv. 8) would not have His Church always enjoy tranquillity, to show Her, as St. Bonaventure says, that She cannot attain the haven of safety without passing over the sea of tribulation. Therefore we must not be scandalised because we see error and passions of all kinds let loose against the clergy who represent the Church, but rather admire the wonders of Omnipotence, preserving Her continually in the midst of so many assaults. Let us deplore the fatal tranquillity of heretical ministers, who avoid persecution by flattering men's perverse inclinations, and encouraging their vain delusions: "I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked, seeing the prosperity of sinners" (Ps. lxxii. 3).

2. *So that the boat was covered with waves.* As the courage of the pilot and the steersman is shown when the boat is overpowered by the waves, so is the prudence and courage of Prelates made manifest in times of persecution, alike to their own great merit and to the profit of the Faithful. St. Gregory says, that it is in time of persecution, not in time of tranquillity, that the Good Shepherd is known from the hireling. Finally, the sword of persecution opens men's hearts and reveals their secret dispositions; then it comes to pass "that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed" (St. Luke ii. 35); then the mask falls, and we can no longer conceal our true sentiments from others, or from ourselves; and then, as it happened in the persecutions of Jesus, the Head

of the Church, when, as St. Augustine says, the wickedness of the Jews and the weakness of the Disciples were alike shown, so also in the persecutions of His Mystical Body, neither the malice of the impious nor the fortitude of true Christians can remain hid. Nor can it be denied that the Omnipotence of Him who protects the Church shines forth amidst these storms, and the infallibility of that glorious promise, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (St. Matt. xvi. 18), is proved. The Church triumphs over them, rising high above all the tribulations of the world, as St. Chrysostom says. Behold what good Almighty God brings forth from the evils of the storm, and how He makes all to work out the loving designs of His Providence. Let us thank Him for revealing to us these consoling truths, and confirming them by the experience of so many ages.

3. *But He was asleep.* St. Chrysostom says that Jesus slept to give occasion for the Disciples' fear; for had he been awake when it happened, either they would not have feared or they would not have prayed. He fulfilled the type of Jonas, who slept tranquilly amidst the general peril, says St. Jerome, and was afterwards awakened. His Human Body slept, says Origen, but His Divinity watched. So He acts now towards the Church. If for a space He seems to be without power or motion, if He seems to shut His Eyes to the insults heaped upon His Church, He does it to purge Her, to prove Her Faith, and afterwards to show Her the greater magnificence of His tenderness and love. Truly He "shall neither slumber nor sleep that keepeth Israel" (Ps. cxx. 4). He knows all the assaults suffered by His Church, He regulates their strength, He determines their duration. Let us pray to God to revive these truths in the minds of Priests who live in regions where Religion is persecuted. Let us pray to Him, that, compassionating our weakness, He would deliver us from these terrible temptations, and not appear as though He slept amidst perils under which we are in danger of sinking.

"Let not the tempest of water drown me . . . and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me."—*Ps.* lxviii. 16.

"Let not a stormy wind break forth in Thy indignation."—*Ezechiel* xiii. 13.

TUESDAY.

THE STORMS WHICH ASSAIL PRIESTS ESPECIALLY.

I. THEY ARE FREQUENT.
II. THEY SHOW HIS WEAKNESS.
III. THE SLUMBER OF JESUS.

"And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but He was asleep."—*St. Matt.* viii. 24.

1. *And behold a great tempest arose in the sea.* It is no wonder that many tempests arise against a ship making a long voyage over the vast ocean. St. Augustine says, that the sea is a figure of this world—bitter with saltness, troubled with storms; and because we are men, and christians, and priests, therefore greater is the number of storms to which we are exposed; and what are these but temptations which strive to hinder our tranquil voyage towards our Heavenly Country, typified, says St. Chrysostom, by the tempest which overtook the first Disciples of the Nazarene? Our bodies and our goods are in perpetual danger; all nature, innumerable accidents, threaten us on every side, and assail us when we least expect it. Our soul is in peril, because at any moment we may lose devotion, innocence, grace, faith, eternity. Again, the works confided to our Ministry are in peril of decay, of becoming useless, of being persecuted, of being destroyed. If the Apostle of the Gentiles narrates his "perils," and so often repeats this word (2 Cor. xi. 26), can we be surprised that, living in the times of which he said "that in the last days should come dangerous times" (2 Tim. iii. 1), we too should suffer perils? If ecclesiastical

labours are acceptable to God and profitable to souls, they will rarely escape the persecution of the wicked, who make war upon us; for it is not possible, says St. Chrysostom, that a man pursuing the cause of virtue should not be exposed to persecutions. Whosoever will serve God and His Church must be prepared for temptation: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Eccli. ii. 1).

2. *So that the boat was covered with waves.* The Church is secure from shipwreck, but not so the Ship of our soul. Many who were sailing prosperously have been lost in the storm, and "made shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. i. 19). The winds of temptation awake against thee, thou art assailed by the waves of passion, thy ship is in peril; thy heart is in jeopardy, if thou consentest, thou hast suffered shipwreck, says St. Augustine. Let us then fear ourselves, let us avoid dangerous occasions, so as not to expose our weakness to trial; and if we have sometimes suffered this shipwreck, let us humble ourselves before God, and acknowledge our misery. It often happens that in the works of our Ministry adversity disturbs us, casts us down, makes us despond, makes us reel "like a drunken man, and all our wisdom is swallowed up" (Ps. cvi. 27). Some Priests, says St. Augustine, when they speak, when they read, when they interpret, appear wise; but in the midst of the storm, when they find themselves contradicted, calumniated, discredited, their counsel fails, they lose their strength. So do we learn our weakness; and if we know how to profit by these lessons, we shall make progress in humility, which is the foundation of all virtue: "power is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

3. *But He was asleep.* If Jesus were not asleep in our Ship, the tempest would not arise; but He is asleep in our hearts, that is, we forget Him, and therefore are we so violently tossed with temptations. "What does this mean, Christ is asleep in thee?" asks St. Augustine. "Thou hast forgotten Christ." He in whom Christ is asleep, that is, he whose Faith is asleep, says St. Augustine again, deserves to waver; and then the divine light in *us darkens,* and the storm becomes more dangerous, because, like

the storm described in the Gospel, it takes place in the darkness. Dark and bitter are the waves and surges of the world, says Venerable Bede. The Devil, who is the "Spirit of storms of wind," taking advantage of this sleep of Jesus and of the darkness, raises storms, that is, he raises the "spirit of error, the spirit of fornication, the spirit of giddiness" (Ps. x. 7; 1 St. John iv. 6; Os. iv. 12; Isaias xix. 14). Moreover, he makes use of men whom he has already seduced, and who have become his instruments, to agitate the Ship of our soul; he makes use of our passions, and of the law in our members fighting against the law of our mind; he makes use, in short, of all his efforts, of all his arts, in order that the just may be "dashed in pieces, as a ship in a storm" (Eccli. xxxiii. 2). Let us weigh our peril; let us call to mind how many unhappy Priests have made eternal shipwreck, and so with holy "fear and trembling work out our salvation" (Phil. ii. 12).

"Save me from pusillanimity of spirit, and a storm."—*Ps.* liv. 9.

"O Lord, let not a tempest oppress me in the night."—*Job* xxvii. 20.

WEDNESDAY.

HOW PRIESTS MUST BEHAVE AMID THE TEMPESTS.

I. THEY MUST DRAW NEAR TO JESUS.
II. THEY MUST AWAKE JESUS.
III. THEY MUST INVOKE JESUS.

"And they came to Him, and awaked Him, saying: Lord, save us, we perish."—*St. Matt.* viii. 25.

1. *And His disciples came to Him.* In all tempests, whether such as are common to the whole Church, or private, affecting individuals among the faithful, men have recourse to Priests, asking of

them counsel and aid, and at least imploring their prayers to the Most High: "Between the porch and the altar the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep, and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people" (Joel ii. 17). Now the first thing that we must do, and that we must impress upon others to do, is, to draw near to Jesus. Man approaches Him by means of penance. How can I dare approach unto God? asks St. Augustine; and he answers, "If thou humble thyself through penance." And truly we must acknowledge, that calamities, and public and private persecutions, are often the punishments of sin. St. Ambrose and Venerable Bede say that the tempest, described in this Gospel, arose because Judas, the traitor, was on board the ship. We must draw near to Him, not by walking or by riding, but by reviving our love. When it is said "approach to Him," comments St. Augustine, "thy heart is meant, not a vehicle; thy affections are meant, not thy feet." Lastly, we must draw near to Him by becoming like Him, and that is done by amendment of life. "By good habits we approach to God," says St. Augustine, ". . . by likeness we approach to God." Let us imitate our Saviour in His patience, His humility, His love, of which He gave us so clear a proof when the last tempest assailed Him, and when He could say with David, His father according to the flesh: "I am come into the depths of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed Me" (Ps. lxviii. 3).

1. *And awaked Him.* What does this mean, to awake Christ? It means to remember Him, to consider His teaching, to meditate on His example. "Awake Him, then," says St. Augustine, "call Him to remembrance; rouse Him up; call Christ to mind . . . give heed to Him." In the tribulations and temptations of the Saints it would seem as if Christ slept; but, says St. Thomas, He sleeps only in the heart of the slothful, who will not think of Him nor imitate Him. Assuredly there is nothing more useful in suffering tribulations, or which will better enable us to conquer temptations, than the thought of Christ. The Apostle would not have the faithful despond because of the horrible tempests of that time: "be not wearied, fainting in your minds" (Heb. xii. 3). And what thought did he suggest to them for their encouragement? *Think,* he says to them, "upon Him that endured such

opposition from sinners against Himself" (Heb. xii. 3). With this thought the Saints endured the severest trials, the most cruel martyrdoms, and experienced the sweetest consolations in the midst of all the bitterness of the world: "I remembered God, and was delighted" (Ps. lxxvi. 4). With this thought, we shall also easily overcome the most violent temptations, and no matter how violent the storm raised by the powers of Hell, it will speedily vanish, as we may know by experience. St. Bonaventure says, that if any one calls to mind, with affectionate remembrance, our Lord's passion, the Devils will flee away trembling; and especially in all the storms of concupiscence, St. Augustine says, there is nothing more powerful, no remedy more efficacious, than the death of Christ. Let tempests abound, we shall not sink, for the Word of the Cross will carry us safely to the Shore.

3. *Saying: Lord, save us, we perish.* Here is the most important part of our duty, when the waves threaten to swallow us up: we must have recourse to Jesus, confessing our weakness and our peril; for, says St. Cyril, it is from our weakness alone that our peril springs. And how often has not our Lord saved us from imminent shipwreck, when we invoked Him! He may truly say to us, in the words of the Psalm: "I heard thee in the secret place of tempest" (lxxx. 8). Let us call to mind the horrible tempests which raged about our fathers, but "they cried to the Lord in their affliction, and He delivered them out of their distresses" (Ps. cvi. 13). "He turned the storm into a breeze, and its waves were still" (29). And yet more, above the stormy sea we have our polar star, and that is Mary. Amidst the winds of temptation, amidst the rocks of tribulation, let us fix the eyes of our heart on Her; that is to say, let us invoke Her Holy Name, and the sky will become serene, and the sea calm. We have an Angel, whom God has given us for our companion and our guide in all our journeyings; let us ask of him light and help, and we shall obtain them. In time of tribulation, call to thy Guardian Angel, says St. Bernard, "Lord, save us, we perish."

"Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord."—*Ps.* xliii. 23.

"Lord, save us, we perish."—*St. Matt.* viii. 25.

FOURTH THURSDAY.

TO SHOW HIS PRIESTS THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER CHRIST SPEAKS—

I. To His Disciples.
II. To the Winds.
III. To the Sea.

"And Jesus saith to them: Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up, He commanded the winds and the sea."—*St. Matt.* viii. 26.

1. *And He saith to them: Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?* Little was the faith of the Disciples, for whilst the Life Itself was with them, they feared death. Perhaps, suggests Origen, though they knew Him to be powerful upon the land, they might think Him not equally powerful upon the sea; His power to rebuke when awakened, they knew, says St. Chrysostom, but that He could do so sleeping they knew not. Here let us enter into ourselves, let us examine ourselves as to our behaviour in public difficulties, and in our own or our neighbours' private afflictions. What has been our faith under these circumstances? Do we deserve reproof? Can it be laid to our charge that we have little faith? Did we reflect that if we kept faithful to the Lord, "His eyes would be upon us, and His ears open to our cry"? Did we reflect that God is never nearer to the christian than when he is in trouble? "I am with him in tribulation" (Ps. xc. 15). In our extremity we gave way to faint-heartedness, as if God were no longer with us; but, as St. Augustine tells us, it was our faith that was asleep within us, and we thought it was Christ *that slept.* He is the Supreme Lord of all things, whether they be

firm and stable as the earth, or tossed and troubled like the stormy sea: the sea swells, buffets, and roars, says St. Augustine, but "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able" (1 Cor. x. 13); and the Preachers of Gospel truth have experienced this in all ages; for, says St. Augustine again, when Thy Preachers scatter Thy truth, and when the waves of the sea rage furiously, "Thou rulest the power of the sea" (Ps. lxxxviii. 10).

2. *Then rising up, He commanded the winds.* We read in St. Mark (iv. 39) that our Saviour uttered the words: "Be still." He spoke to the Winds, for they are His creatures, and the Winds heard Him, as they heard Him in the creation and disposition of all things: "He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created" (Ps. cxlviii. 5). By the same authority, He commands other Winds, and they are, says St. Jerome, the breath of the Devil, the passions of the human heart, the voices of men, the edicts of Princes; to them He says, "Be still," and at His voice the bitterest persecutions cease. But let us take heed lest these Winds find us weak, as the dust scattered before the wind, "as dust before the wind" (Ps. xxxiv. 5). Let us consider the meaning of this: the dust is the sport of the winds, it offers no resistance to them; so the weak priest who yields to temptation is no longer, as he ought to be, a pillar of the Church: "The wind is temptation," says St. Augustine; "when temptation cometh, the dust is raised, it neither standeth, nor resisteth." Let us place all our confidence in Jesus, who can restrain the fury of our spiritual enemies; for, says St. Thomas, Christ is King, and as a King, He can repress their violence. Let us pray to Him to deliver us not only from our enemies, but even "from the fear of the enemy" (Ps. lxiii. 2); and let us impress these truths on tempted, troubled souls, promising them that "the Lord will not forsake" them "in the evil time" (2 Mach. i. 5). Let us impress them also upon sinners, that they may not plead the violence of temptations, and so "make excuses in sins" (Ps. cxl. 4).

3. *And the sea.* We may justly fear the tempest's engulphing us, that is, that we may sink into the abyss of sin; but let us confide in Him, who, when He gathered the waters together into one

place, put a bridle on the sea, and obliged it to break its waves upon the shore: "hitherto shalt thou come, and shalt go no further, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves" (Job. xxxviii. 11). Let us trust in Him Who "rebuked the sea, and dried it up" (Nahum i. 4). "All things are in His power, and there is none that can resist His will" (Esther xiii. 9). After having tried us in the storm, He will grant us calm, and will show the wonderful operations of His mercy, so that we shall say: "Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to Him, and His wonderful works to the children of men" (Ps. cvi. 12). "Imitate the sea . . . obey the Creator," says St. Augustine. At Christ's command the sea giveth ear, and art thou deaf? Resign thyself unto His hands; trust in Him; bear thy trials as He commands thee: "Do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord" (Ps. xxvi. 14).

"Thou rulest the power of the sea, and appeasest the motion of the waves thereof."—*Ps.* lxxxviii. 10.

"After a storm Thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping Thou pourest in joyfulness."—*Tobias* iii. 22.

FRIDAY.

HOW ZEALOUS PRIESTS PROFIT BY THE CALM.

I. THEY ATTEND TO THEIR OWN SANCTIFICATION.
II. THEY LABOUR TO CONVERT HERETICS.
III. THEY GIVE THEMSELVES TO THE AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH.

"And there came a great calm. But the men wondered, saying: What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey Him?"—*St. Matt.* viii. 26, 27.

1. *And there came a great calm.* The Apostle exhorted the faithful to profit by a time of calm by attending to their affairs: "*use your* endeavour to be quiet, and do your own business"

(1 Thess. iv. 11). And what is our most momentous affair, but our sanctification? This is our most serious business, our most difficult business, nor can it be performed by any other, but by ourselves alone. It is especially incumbent on the Priest to attend to this business, for, as he was warned at his ordination, in him should shine forth the pattern of every virtue. Neither knowledge, nor wisdom, nor fervour, must be wanting in Ecclesiastics, says Origen; and, to acquire these, the soul of the Priest must know how to profit by times of peace, whether the calm be public or private, and he must not be "talkative and wandering, not bearing to be quiet, not able to abide still at home" (Prov. viii. 10, 11). This is the seasonable time for cultivating his own ground, that afterwards he may draw thence riches to be employed in the building up of his house, that is, the Church: "diligently till thy ground, that afterwards thou mayst build thy house" (Prov. xxiv. 27). This is especially the time to attend to the praises of God, and the love of God, for it is He who has given the calm: "Is any cheerful in mind, let him sing" (St. James v. 13). Hence Psalmody is called by St. Basil the tranquillity of souls, the ruler of peace; and by St. Augustine, the standard of peace.

2. *But the men wondered.* When perfect calm unexpectedly succeeds a horrible tempest, and a cloudless day follows a stormy night, wonder is awakened in the souls of all men, not of Christians only, and then is a favourable opportunity for convincing unbelievers. For, at such times, they are wont to exclaim, like the Magicians of Egypt: "This is the finger of God" (Exodus viii. 19). When Almighty God, either by stupendous miracles, or by the secret unction of His grace, changes the hearts of nations and of Kings, and restores peace, liberty, dignity, and splendour to His Church, when She seemed on the point of shipwreck, then must the most obstinate acknowledge the Omnipotence of the Lord's Arm in favour of His Spouse: "this is the change of the Right Hand of the Most High" (Ps. lxxxvi. 11). Hence, after times of persecution, zealous Priests have always employed their pens against Heretics, and God has blessed their efforts. Let us consider how the Doctors of the Church have appeared, says St. Gregory, "when the storm of persecution was overpast, and the

nights of long infidelity were ended." Let us remember that we, too, are called to the lot of this Ministry, which is peculiar to the Priesthood, and which, in all ages, finds error to be combated, arms to be wielded, heavenly succour in order to victory. Let us implore the Divine aid, that we may employ times of calm for the defence of the truth, and may be able to say with the Apostle: "We were not disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing, but in labour and in toil we worked, night and day" (2 Thess. iii. 7, 8).

3. *Saying: What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey Him?* When the winds of passion are appeased, and the sea of the world is once more calm, after the storms which have assailed the Church, Priests, who are animated by the Spirit of God, will employ themselves in setting in order all that has suffered loss and injury during the time of adversity. "He recovered the Temple, and delivered the City, and restored the laws that were abolished, the Lord, with all clemency, shewing mercy to him" (2 Mach. ii. 23). This is what the Jewish Priests did in times of tranquillity; the Temple, the City, the Laws, claimed their attention. It will easily happen, that in tempestuous times the Churches will be profaned, and despoiled of their ornaments: "O God, the heathens are come into Thy inheritance, they have defiled Thy holy temple" (Ps. lxxviii. 1). Hence our first care must be to restore the glory of the Sanctuary as far as possible, in order to honour the Most High Who dwelleth therein, and to gather together and sanctify the faithful. "We will glorify . . . the temple with great glory" (1 Mach. xv. 9). Our next care must be to promote the welfare of the Church, which is called "the City of the Lord" (Isa. lx. 14), in order that She may recover all that She has lost by persecutions, and acquire a splendour which, perhaps, She had not before. Lastly, during public disturbances, many children of the Church transgress her laws; others forget them; some have not been able to learn them. Faithful Priests imitate Esdras, who, taking advantage of the universal calm, "read in the book of the law of God, day by day, from the first day to the last" (2 Esdras viii.), and this he did for eight days, that the *Law of God* might be thoroughly known and observed, and

transgressors moved to repentance. Let us pray to Almighty God to grant us peace, and to take us profit by it, that we may extend the reignof virtue and holiness.

"Let peace be in Thy strength, and abundance in Thy towers."—*Ps.* cxxi. 7.

"Who deliverest Israel from all evil . . . preserve Thy own portion, and sanctify it."—2 *Mach.* i. 25, 26.

SATURDAY.

IN HER PURIFICATION, MARY TEACHES PRIESTS HOW TO CELEBRATE THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS WORTHILY.

I. How they are to prepare for it.
II. How they are to celebrate it.
III. How they are to profit by it.

"They carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord."—*St. Luke* ii. 22.

1. If Mary "carried Jesus to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord," Priests, when they celebrate Mass, "carry" Him to the mystical "Jerusalem," that is, to the Church, and there "present" the same Holy Victim to the same "Lord," and for the same ends. But how great is the difference between Mary's preparation and our preparation for this sublime act! She prepared Herself with so great purity, says St. Bernard, that there was no need of Her purification; She had no real, either legal or carnal, stain; and yet, before fulfilling Her great office, She waited in the Court of the unclean until the Priest had completed the prescribed rites for Her purification, and led Her into the Court of the purified (Lev. xii. 2). What a lesson is this for Priests, teaching them to prepare

themselves for Mass with the greatest possible purity of soul and body; for if Christ, during His mortal life, chose to be presented by a most pure Mother, by whom, says St. Peter Damian, would He be presented, now that He reigns gloriously in Heaven, if not by pure hands? Moreover, She prepared Herself with humility; for She concealed Her Divine Maternity and Her Virginity, and would not appear to be different from other women. St. Bernard says, that as the Son would be circumcised as a sinner, so She would be purified as unclean. What ought our humility to be when we approach the Altar, conscious of our unworthiness of so sublime an honour? We ought to remember, as St. Martin says, that no wrinkles, nothing which contaminates mind or body, should affect the Priest. Lastly, She prepared Herself with immense fervour, knowing what a depth of mystery, of the wisdom and knowledge of God, was comprehended in this act. What, then, should be our fervour when we offer the Holy Sacrifice?

2. The Blessed Virgin, in "presenting Her Son," accurately fulfilled the ceremonial prescribed by the Law. It is worthy of note that St. Luke mentions this fact four times: "according to the law of Moses . . . as it is written in the law of the Lord . . . according to the custom of the law . . . after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord." By these repetitions the Holy Spirit teaches us, that Mary fulfilled these ceremonial precepts with careful accuracy, although neither the letter nor the spirit of the law bound Her to them. We too are bound to an exact fulfilment of all the prescribed ceremonies in celebrating Holy Mass. Our diligence, says St. Bonaventure, should be great in act, greater in word, greatest of all in intention. Let us pray to the Blessed Virgin to obtain for us a perfect observance of the sacred ceremonies, and an elevation of mind whilst we are celebrating the Divine Mysteries.

3. Mary tasted the purest joy "in presenting Her Son to the Lord," not only because She presented a Sacrifice worthy of Almighty God, but also because She saw Him acknowledged by Simeon and Anna, who now obtained from God the fulfilment of their desires with ineffable consolations. And Mary rejoiced in *their joy, for it* is the property of holy souls to "rejoice with them

that rejoice" (Rom. xii. 15). So, in celebrating Holy Mass, we too should rejoice, that by our means God is glorified, the Faithful are nourished, and the whole Church largely benefited. This is the time, says St. Bernard, when we ought to be glad and rejoice. We must not, however, be satisfied with present consolations, but imitate Mary, who ever retained a grateful, thankful remembrance of them, wondering as it were at them. Never should we forget the great grace of being permitted to say Holy Mass, but continually wonder at the infinite condescension of Almighty God. And amidst these consolations, let us make use of the strength we have received in the Holy Sacrifice to prepare ourselves for the tribulations which it may be the will of God we should suffer, and for the temptations with which the Devil may assail us. Even Mary, in the midst of all the consolations She then experienced, heard these words from holy Simeon: "Behold this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted, and thy own soul a sword shall pierce" (St. Luke ii. 34, 35).

"I will go in to the Altar of God, to God, who giveth joy to my youth."—*Ps.* xlii. 4.

"O Mary, pray to Thy Son, that He may not be to me for fall, but for resurrection."—*St. Luke* ii. 34.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

THE JUSTIFICATION OF SOULS IS TO BE ATTRIBUTED TO JESUS CHRIST.

I. WHETHER WE CONSIDER THE CAUSE.
II. WHETHER WE CONSIDER THE SUBJECT.
III. WHETHER WE CONSIDER THE MEANS.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 24.

1. *The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a man that sowed.* At the request of the Apostles, our Saviour deigned to explain this parable, saying: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the Kingdom" (St. Matt. xiii. 37). Therefore would He be acknowledged to be the sole Sower of the just; and He called Himself "Man," and "the Son of Man," both to exercise humility and also to confute heretics, who in future times should deny His Humanity, says St. Thomas. But whilst He declared Himself true "Man," He also declared Himself True God, in proclaiming Himself to be the author of Justification. He calls Himself "the Son of Man" in what pertains to man, and spiritual seed in what pertains to God, says the same St. Thomas; and the Council of Trent, in enumerating the causes of justification, says: "*The final cause is the glory of God and of Christ, and the Life Eternal; the efficient cause is the merciful God; the meritorious cause is His Only-begotten and Well-beloved Son; the instrumental cause is the Sacrament; the formal cause is the Justice of God, not that justice whereby He is just, but that whereby He makes us just.*" All this is of faith.

What folly, then, would it not be for a Priest to glory in the Justification which souls obtain through his Ministry, as if he were the cause of it; we are but rude instruments in the hands of the Divine Mercy, and, because of our imperfections, apt only to oppose obstacles to His merciful operations. Never then say to thyself,—my talents, my efforts, my labours have converted sinners, have preserved the just, have increased their justice: "Say not in thy heart, my own might, and the strength of my own hand, have achieved all these things for me" (Deut. viii. 17).

2. *Good seed.* This good seed does not mean the Word of God, says St. Thomas, but the man himself in whom it is sown; and rightly is this man compared to seed, for as seed is the principle of propagation, so just men are the foundation of the Faith, continues St. Thomas. Almighty God has promised that there should always be a number of Saints in the Church, who, like seed, should perpetuate holiness in Her: "that which shall stand therein shall be holy seed" (Isa. vi. 13). Now, if thou art of this number, it is certainly not by thine own power, neither by thine own strength hast thou conquered, or dost thou now conquer thine enemies; but with the Apostle thou must say: "Thanks be to God, Who hath given us the victory, through Our Lord Jesus Christ." If thou hast just souls under thy charge, remember that they are "children of the Kingdom," that is "sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). Couldst thou give them this sonship, this inheritance, which surpasses all the powers of nature, and the faculties of thine own intelligence? Say, therefore, with the Mother of the Machabees, "I know not how you were formed in my womb; for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life" (2 Mach. vii. 22); that is, I neither know nor understand how I have begotten you, nor how the Holy Spirit is come upon you!

3. *In his field.* We have heard from our Saviour that His Field is the World, and by this He would have us understand that all the world is His; for, says St. Chrysostom, whereas He Himself is the Sower, and that of His own field, it is quite clear that the present world is also His. Therefore all the means we may have made use of for men's justification are not ours but

God's: whether they be natural or supernatural means, they are God's, the Author as well of nature as of grace. All that thou hast thou owest to Him from Whom thou hast received it, to Him, the Lord, thy Maker and Benefactor, Who orders the course of the stars, the revolutions of the seasons, the fruitfulness of the earth; all minister to thee, says St. Bernard. Thou canst not have even the will to do good of thyself, it is the great gift of God: "every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (St. James i. 17). The result of all thy care will be nothing without God's blessing, therefore implore it continually from His mercy, and show thyself grateful when thou hast received it. Let these words ever resound in thy ears: "They are all Mine."

"For Thou art great, and dost wonderful things, Thou art God alone."—*Ps.* lxxxv. 10.

"And the nations shall know that Thou art the Lord, the Sanctifier of Israel, when Thy sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for ever."—*Ezechiel* xxxvii. 28.

MONDAY.

THE SLEEP OF ECCLESIASTICS.

I. IN WHAT IT CONSISTS.
II. THE USE THE DEVIL MAKES OF IT.
III. ITS CONSEQUENCES.

"But while men were asleep, His enemy came, and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 25.

1. *But while men were asleep.* Sleep is that state in which man's eyes being closed, and his senses dulled, he neither sees nor feels what is true and real; what he sees and feels is dreamt, *and imaginary.* In like manner, a soul that is slumbering sees

and feels only dreams, that is, vanities; and such, in the language of Holy Scripture, are the good things of this world which we love. These, like dreams, deceive those who found their hopes upon them, and when man awakes, that is, at his death, they will disappear: "as a dream that fleeth away they shall not be found" (Job xx. 8). Yet among Ecclesiastics "many sleep" (1 Cor. xi. 30), and this sleep comes easily upon us, and almost without our perceiving it, unless we make continual efforts and watch over ourselves to keep ourselves awake, as St. Gregory warns us. Darkness contributes to this drowsiness, for "they that sleep, sleep in the night" (2 Thess. v. 7); which means, that want of meditation contributes to it; for, says St. Ambrose, "he who meditates on the Law, is always in the light," meditation being an inexhaustible fountain of light. Love of dreams contributes to it, that is, a passion for riches, honours, and pleasures; and hence Almighty God complains of those Priests who "sleep, loving dreams," because they become "blind watchmen, they are all ignorant, dumb dogs, not able to bark" (Isaias lvi. 10). Let us meditate on the misery of such a state, and seriously examine ourselves whether this be our state.

2. *His enemy came.* The Devil is the real enemy of God, for, as St. Thomas says, in all his machinations he is animated solely by hatred of God, nor can he be actuated by any other motive; and he gives vent to this rage by making himself the declared enemy of the keepers, from whom he would fain take away the glory of having carefully guarded the Field. Moreover, he is the declared enemy of the good seed, which he strives to choke, and he is the enemy also of the cockle, which he desires to see cast into the fire. He is called the enemy, says St. Chrysostom, because of the harm he has done to men . . . for in its origin it sprang from his enmity, not to us, but to God. He rejoices to see that the keepers, to whom Jesus has committed the care of this seed, lie sleeping, for then is the time to ruin both: "When the Rulers of the Church are negligent," says St. Augustine, "the Devil comes." The same truth is taught us under another metaphor, by St. Ephrem Syrus. The shepherd's slumber, he says, is the joy of the wolves. Hence St. Jerome concludes, that

he who rules the Church must not sleep, lest, by his negligence, the Enemy of man oversow cockle. By Thy love for my soul, and for the souls committed to my charge, deliver me from this sleep, O my God. Let not Thine Enemy and mine "rejoice over me" (Ps. xxxvii. 17).

3. *And oversowed cockle.* Our Saviour explains the word "cockle" twice, saying, in the first place (v. 38), that "the cockle are the children of the wicked one;" and in the next (v. 41), He adds, "all scandals, and them that work iniquity." Cockle, then, is false doctrine, vain superstitions, furtive introduction of scandalous usages, open revolution of licentious manners—all abuses in short, all disorders, all scandals. And what is the cause of all this evil? The sleep of the Guardians. Isaias points out the effects of this sleep when he says, "All ye beasts of the field come to devour, all ye beasts of the forest" (lvi. 9). That is to say, whilst the Guardians slept and loved dreams, every kind of beast from the neighbouring fields and distant woods came to devour and ruin the Lord's Field. "The beasts of the field" are the vices of a corrupt civilisation; "the beasts of the forest" are the vices of audacious ignorance, and both work together in peopling Hell. You do not carefully guard your Lord's Field, and the vine which His Right Hand hath planted: "the work of the Lord you regard not, nor do you consider the works of His hands; therefore hath hell enlarged her soul, and opened her mouth without any bounds" (Isaias v. 12, 14); she is not satiated with swallowing up souls. We are Priests, Confessors, Preachers, Missionaries, Parish Priests, Prelates, and let us therefore remember that Christ continually enjoined watchfulness, and, says St. Hilary, He enjoined it especially on "the princes of the people." Let us watch and pray that the Enemy may not succeed in his machinations, either against ourselves or our flock.

"Enlighten my eyes, that I never sleep in death."—*Ps.* xii. 41.

"It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep."—*Rom.* xiii. 11.

TUESDAY.

THE ACCUSERS OF SLUMBERING PRIESTS.

I. THE EVIL WHICH THEY CANNOT CONCEAL FROM THEMSELVES.

II. THE COMPLAINTS OF THEIR FLOCK, WHO RESENT IT.

III. THE VOICE OF GOD WHICH HAS WARNED THEM.

"And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle. And the servants of the goodman of the house coming, said to him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it cockle? And he said to them: An enemy hath done this."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 26, 27, 28.

1. *There appeared also the cockle.* St. Thomas says that the cockle does not appear at first, but when it is grown up it is clearly seen. This is especially true in regard to heretics, who, as St. Chrysostom remarks, at the beginning disguise their malignity, teaching some things that are good; then they begin to speak evil of the clergy, in order that they may be listened to with pleasure, and in order to alienate the affections of the people from their pastors, and finally from the Church; and then, having gained confidence, they manifest their malice, and openly preach error. In the same way, corruption of manners has generally an obscure beginning, springing from trifling scandals given to children, or scattered in conversation, or introduced among certain classes; but this little spark gives birth to a devastating fire: "Behold how small a fire, what a great wood it kindleth" (St. James iii. 5). Any one who is versed in Ecclesiastical History, knows that heresy and corruption of manners have always sprung up and grown from hidden seed, and knows also how great a share the indolence and slumber of the Clergy have

had in these evils. Too late has the evil been recognised, when there is no cure but to cut off the diseased member: "thy bruise is incurable, thy wound is very grievous . . . thy sorrow is incurable" (Jer. xxx. 12, 15). And can we conceal from ourselves that, in our days, injustice, irreligion, incredulity, open immorality, have overspread the earth, precisely because those whose duty it was to watch failed to do so? "Cursing, and lying, and killing, and theft, and adultery have overflowed the land" (Osee iv. 2), and what excuse can we allege if all this evil happened while "men were asleep"?

2. *And the servants of the goodman of the house coming.* Who are these servants who draw near to the Father of the family? St. Augustine answers, that here by servants is meant the faithful; nor need we wonder that they were previously called the good seed, for they were called by a different name, being regarded under a different aspect. In like manner as cockle smothers, dries up, and ruins good seed, so do "the children of the wicked one" bring injury, ruin, and death to "the children of the Kingdom." Therefore the faithful have good reason to complain of slumbering priests, who cause the loss of as much good seed as is destroyed by the cockle which the enemy sows through their fault. We kill as many, says St. Gregory, as we see going to death, through our silence and tepidity. They complain, because they cannot say of their Priests what the Prophet said: "I see a rod watching" (Jer. i. 11); nor can such Priests say with Jacob, who slept not in his care for the field confided to him: "Sleep departed from my eyes" (Gen. xxxi. 40). On the contrary, the faithful praise such as are faithful custodiers, good keepers, and who, as St. Bernard says, wisely foresee the counsels of the wicked one, elude his snares, dissipate his schemes, frustrate his machinations. Can we believe that the complaints of an evil entreated, afflicted, betrayed people will not reach the Throne of God, soliciting His vengeance to free them from their negligent guardians? For He is the God, who has said: "I have seen the affliction of my people, . . . and I have heard their cry" (1 Exodus iii. 7).

3. *An enemy hath done this.* Here God's voice is clear. The *Devil is the* sower of the cockle, and he is called *Homo inimicus*

—*a man an enemy*, because by sinning he ceased to be like God. Tertullian calls him a man who, profiting by darkness and sleep, comes to corrupt the harvest of good wheat. Therefore the guardians are well aware that this enemy watches, and is ready to take advantage of darkness and sleep; that he goeth about among the faithful "as a roaring lion" (1 Pet. v. 8) who "walketh, seeking rest and findeth none" (St. Matt. xii. 43). They know how often the Lord enjoined watchfulness: "Watch ye therefore . . . at all times" (St. Luke xxi. 36). "Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock" (Acts xx. 28). How, then, can they justify themselves before the Master of the field if they have served Him ill? Let us meditate carefully on the great advice of St. Bernard to Priests, that they should awake from their sleep and implore the grace of God never again to fall into it: "You cannot perish alone, because you ought to go before, teaching and working." We are Soldiers, Fishermen, Labourers, Shepherds, says St. Chrysostom, and therefore sleep becomes us not.

"I have slept and have taken my rest, and I have risen up because the Lord hath protected me."—*Ps.* iii. 6.

"The Angel . . . waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep."—*Zach.* iv. 1.

FIFTH WEDNESDAY.

IMPATIENT ZEAL.

I. WHO HAVE THIS ZEAL.
II. IT IS UNREASONABLE.
III. UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES IT IS PLEASING TO GOD.

"And the servants said to Him: Wilt thou that we go, and gather it up?"—*St. Matt.* xiii. 20.

1 *And the servants said to Him.* Zeal is easily enkindled in good Christians, when they behold the injury which unbelievers and the licentious bring upon the world. It would appear that our Saviour praised the zeal of these "servants" of God, both because they desired the extirpation of scandalous evils, and also, says St. Thomas, because they would not do it of their own accord, but would await their Lord's command. Still He restrains this zeal, reminding them that they knew not the spirit of the New Testament, and would therefore imitate James and John, who said to Him: "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" and therefore they deserved the same rebuke as those two Disciples whom "turning, he rebuked, saying, You know not of what spirit you are" (St. Luke ix. 54, 55). If you are anointed by the Holy Spirit, says Venerable Bede, you ought to imitate His goodness. Those men are agitated by an impatient zeal, who know not the science of government, and cannot foresee the evil consequences of impetuosity, who "have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. x. 2); they do not understand that, like every other virtue, zeal, to be a virtue, must have its rule and moderation, and therefore St. *Ambrose said that* there should be a certain measure and discip-

line of zeal, and he is happy who knows it. The most fervent souls, and souls inflamed with Divine love, are frequently agitated by this zeal, and therefore, says St. Bernard, they need a strong curb to restrain their zeal within just bounds.

2. *Wilt Thou that we go?* How different are the counsels of Almighty God from the counsels of men, for He desires not the death of the sinner, but that he "turn from his way and live" (Ezechiel xxxiii. 11). How unjust is the man who would have God take sudden vengeance and suffer men to eradicate all the cockle at once. They should remember that they themselves were once cockle, that they once did evil and lived as sinners, and yet their life has been prolonged that they might reform it. St. Augustine reminds them, that when they committed sin they continued to live for this reason, that they might not repeat it, and because they have passed over, why should they wish to destroy the bridge of God's compassion? In another place the same Holy Father reproves this impatient zeal at great length, and says that they who have it become impatient beyond endurance, and breathe abroad the evil savour of their indignation. Such men forget that others endured their wickedness, and are silent on that head. Let us be on our guard against indiscreet zeal, which, as St. Bernard says, is wanting in knowledge and prudence, is neither efficacious nor useful, but often most hurtful.

3. *And gather it up.* Heretics and wicked men have greatly abused this parable: they would not be "rooted out" by those who have authority from God, and whose duty it is to extirpate them, and, because "sentence is not speedily pronounced against" them, and they are not immediately separated from the faithful, they "commit evils without any fear" (Eccl. viii. 11). They claim impunity, and will not submit to chastisement, and the same St. Augustine, who had for a time been deceived by their pretensions, says of them: I had not yet experienced either how far they would dare in the way of evil, or how far discipline might change them for the better.

They aim at stripping the Church of those arms which Christ has given Her, although the Apostle says: "Put away the evil one from among yourselves" (1 Cor. v. 13); and, "I would they

were even cut off who trouble you" (Gal. v. 12). But if they persist in prosecuting their ministry of iniquity in the midst of the faithful, the Pastors of the Church must visit them with ecclesiastical censures, and even with Excommunication, in order to preserve the Lord's Field from harm; but at the same time, says St. Augustine, they must do it in all charity, and for the sake of correction. Let us pray to Almighty God, that He would bestow this prudent zeal on the clergy, and especially on Prelates, so that they may exercise their power "unto edification, and not unto destruction" (2 Cor. xiii. 10).

"I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked, seeing the prosperity of sinners."—*Ps.* lxxii. 3.

"Have mercy, O Lord, on all the house of Israel, and be jealous for Thy Holy Name."—*Ezechiel* xxxix. 25.

THURSDAY.

JESUS CHRIST A PATTERN OF TRUE ZEAL.

I. He shows us His purpose.
II. He assigns the reason.
III. He fixes the term of patience.

"And He said: No, lest perhaps in gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 29, 30.

1. *And he said: No.* St. Thomas says, our Saviour shows in these words what the purpose of Almighty God is. Who can understand the zeal which God has for His own glory, and for the salvation of the Mystical Jerusalem? "I, the Lord, have spoken it in My zeal" (Ezech. v. 13). "I have been jealous for Zion with a great jealousy" (Zach. viii. 2). This zeal suffices to burn *up all the* cockle with which the enemy has oversowed the whole

harvest, and one day "all the land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy" (Sophonias i. 18); but now He is long-suffering, and listens to the voice of His mercy: "Thou, O Lord, art a God of compassion, and merciful, patient, and of much mercy" (Ps. lxxxv. 15). With a patience well worthy of His paternal goodness, Almighty God bears with the sinner, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance" (2 Pet. iii. 9). Let us compassionate those who are obstinate in vice, and who abuse "the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering" (Rom. ii. 4). Let us imitate Jesus Christ, who, whilst He was in the world, was content to dwell amongst not only the good seed but the cockle. He lamented over it, but He did not root it out. This good seed, says St. Augustine, this grain of Christ's sowing, has to grow in the midst of tares. Let us imitate Him, in our poor measure, as children imitate their father; let us imitate Him who makes His sun to rise upon the good seed and upon the cockle, and waters both with the same rain: "that you may be the children of your Father Who is in heaven, Who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (St. Matt. v. 45).

2. *Lest, perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it.* Although Almighty God bears with the cockle in His field, He was certainly not obliged to give us a reason for His long-suffering, and yet He deigns to reveal this reason to us in those words. As the roots of the cockle are interwoven with the roots of the wheat, so that the one cannot be pulled up without the other, so in like manner the malice of the wicked is bound up with the virtue of the good, in such wise as that if the one were removed, the other would lose its lustre and merit. The wheat is not choked by the tares, says St. Augustine; nay, through endurance of the tares, the fruit of the wheat is increased. If it were not for this mingling of the cockle with the good seed, examples of solid piety in the midst of a corrupt world, stedfastness in holiness in spite of scandals, patience under unjust persecution, heroic charity towards enemies, would have no place on earth; nor would the Apostle have inculcated upon all Prelates, in the person of Timothy, "to reprove, entreat, rebuke in all

patience and doctrine" (2 Tim. iv. 2); nor warned him that "evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse . . . but continue thou in those things which thou hast learned" (2 Tim. iii. 13, 14). Without this intermingling, zeal would have lost immense merit. Moreover, the cockle bears so close a resemblance to wheat, that before coming to maturity the one may easily be mistaken for the other; and it is easy to make the same mistake in a moral sense, for some men appear good or appear bad without being in reality such as they appear, and therefore the Apostle warns us not "to judge before the time" (1 Cor. iv. 5). Lastly, in this moral sense, it is possible that the cockle may become wheat; that is, that the sinner may be converted and sanctified; so that if sinners were at once rooted out, many souls would be lost, who might have attained to great holiness, and, at last, have entered on the heavenly glory.

Let us adore the profound Counsels of the Divine Wisdom, let us meditate upon them, and frequently explain them to our flock; for to see the cockle flourish gives scandal to weak souls, whilst men who call themselves strong-minded take occasion from it to utter innumerable blasphemies.

3. *Suffer both to grow until the harvest.* Let not the Priest who is lax, sacrilegious, impenitent, deceive himself; the patience of God has its limits; his pleasures and disorders may "grow" and multiply "until the harvest," that is, until death, but no further. Then there will be no more place for conversion, or for mercy. When he least expects it the day will come, in which God will say to death: "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap, because the hour is come to reap" (Apoc. xiv. 15). Remember that "the time is short" (1 Cor. vii. 29) for this mingling together of bad and good, and although thou mayest dwell among good Priests, after the harvest will come a terrible separation: "two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left" (St. Luke xvii. 35). Let us not delay to profit by the acceptable time, and by the grace which God offers us. If hitherto we have been "children of the wicked one," like the sons of Eli, let us endeavour to clothe ourselves with the justice of *Onias and Zacharias.* Saul became St. Paul; Peter and Thomas

did not persist in obstinacy like Judas, and therefore they are Blessed. Why should we follow this wicked Apostle?

"Save me according to Thy mercy; and let them know that this is Thy hand."—*Ps.* cviii. 26, 27.

"Thou, Lord, hast mercy upon all, because Thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance."—*Wisdom* xi. 24.

FRIDAY.

IN THIS PARABLE OUR SAVIOUR STIMULATES US TO BE ZEALOUS—

I. FOR OUR OWN SALVATION.
II. FOR THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.
III. FOR THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE JUST.

"And in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat, gather ye into My barn."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 30.

1. *And in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers.* Harvest is the time in which we gather the fruits which we look for from our sowing; and this harvest is twofold, says St. Thomas, one in the Church on earth, the other in the Church in heaven; and he goes on to say, that the ministers of the first harvest are Priests, beginning from the Apostles; whilst in the second, the reapers will be the Angels. Our Divine Lord has laid upon us the charge of gathering the fruits of His Word, His labours, and His Blood, therefore He said: "I have sent you to reap that in which you did not labour; others have laboured, and you have entered into their labours" (St. John iv. 38). What a disgrace, then, would it be for us, who are Guardians of the harvest, and reapers, if we should become as the cockle? What would our punishment be, if, like the cockle, we should be gathered into bundles and cast into the

flames? For, says St. Lawrence Justinian, if he who is useless and unfruitful is condemned, like cockle, to eternal fire, how much greater will his punishment be who was bound to cultivate the field, and has become cockle? Let us then labour zealously for our eternal salvation, which is the one thing needful. Greater is the peril of becoming cockle, in the dignity of our state, than in the condition of simple laymen; for, says St. Augustine, "the more we are honoured, the more we are in peril." We have three kinds of temptation common to all Christians, and these are, the temptation to wander from the faith, the temptation to follow our passions, the temptation to lose relish for the Word of God; but a fourth temptation is peculiar to our ministry, and it is the temptation to govern souls ill. Let us pray to God to lead us into none of these temptations.

2. *Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn.* If we had this parable ever before our eyes, sinners would become objects of compassion to us, and would be a perpetual incentive to our zeal; for they are always in danger of death, and then they would be "first gathered up, secondly bound, thirdly burnt;" that is to say, as St. Thomas explains these words, they would be separated from the good, and from all good things, they would be condemned to eternal punishment, they would become food for the unquenchable fire. Let us meditate then on beholding these unhappy men burning in the fires of hell, says St. Jerome; let us consider that God has decreed that, not confusedly, but according to the manner of his perversity, the pertinacity of every one's error is punished. To change the cockle sown by the Devil into good seed is a great gift to offer to the Lord; for, says St. Chrysostom, although thou givest countless treasures to the poor, thou wilt do no such work as he who converteth one soul.

3. *But the wheat gather ye into My barn.* What is the Lord's barn? St. Jerome says it is the Saints, who are called wheat, and are gathered into the barn; that is, into the heavenly mansions. There they shall "shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (St. Matt. xiii. 43); that is, they will be made like to the splendour of the Sun of Justice. Then how great will be the *consolation of a zealous* Priest, when he shall behold his crown of

many faithful, who, through his ministry, have persevered in justice and are saved. St. Maximian says: How great will be the glory of the Priest who shall rejoice in the wisdom and devotion of his children. With good reason did the Apostle call the faithful "his crown;" for what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? "For you are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20). St. Cyril says that the Apostle calls those his joy, his glory, and his crown, who, having received the faith, had enriched it with the splendour of virtue and persevered in it. St. Thomas says that the honour of the triumph rests with the Captain, who leads the soldiers to fight and causes them to gain the battle. Let us aspire to this joyful crown, let us labour with ardour and perseverance, but, at the same time, let us place all our confidence in God.

"Draw me not away together with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity destroy me not."—*Ps.* xxvii. 3.

"Let it not be said of us, O Lord, the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."—*Jeremias* viii. 20.

FIFTH SATURDAY.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN. II.

MARY OFFERS HER SON IN THE TEMPLE TO HIS FATHER.

I. She offers Him as a Victim.
II. She offers Him as a Priest.
III. She offers Him as the Head of the Predestinate.

"And to offer a sacrifice, according as it is written in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons."—*St. Luke* ii. 24.

1. *And to offer a sacrifice.* Jesus Christ, through His infinite charity, was to be a Bloody Victim on the Altar of the Cross, without the Temple, and afterwards an Unbloody Victim within the Temple of the New Jerusalem, that is, in the Catholic Church. Hence the Blessed Virgin offered Him to His Eternal Father, first, without the Temple, with a real shedding of blood, when He was circumcised as an Infant, and afterwards, without shedding of blood, in the Temple, when She fulfilled the rite of Purification. She offered Him at all times, as "an oblation, and a sacrifice to God, for an odour of sweetness" (Eph. v. 2). Most holy Mother, offer for our reconciliation this Victim so dear to God; He will readily accept Him, Whom He declared to be His Well-beloved Son, in Whom alone He is well pleased. So prays St. Bernard. Meanwhile, who can conceive what was said by the Blessed Virgin, what was the uplifting of her heart in offering this Victim? Still, with St. Thomas of Villanova, we may imagine *Her saying to the* Eternal Father: Behold I, Thy Handmaid, offer

Thee a Victim for the whole world, Who is at once Thy Son and mine, Who, in my arms, offers Himself to Thee as a Morning Sacrifice, and Who, one day, will offer Himself to Thee as an Evening Sacrifice from the arms of the Cross. Why do we not excite the like sentiments in ourselves, when by us the Church, typified by Mary, offers the same Son to the same Father in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? for, says St. Peter of Cluny, what He did once in dying, She does continually in offering. Let us revive our faith, remembering, as the Council of Trent teaches, that the same Christ is therein contained, and offered in an unbloody manner, Who once offered Himself in a bloody manner upon the Altar of the Cross.

2. *According as it is written in the Law of the Lord.* The Law of the Lord prescribed that the first-born should be offered to Him, both in memory of the preservation of the first-born of the Israelites when the first-born of Egypt were slain, and also because by the Natural Law all the first-born were Priests. Mary then offered Him who is "the First-born before all creatures" (Eccli. xxiv. 5), and yet was "Her First-born Son" (St. Matt. i. 25). She offered Him as "the Saint of Saints" (Dan. ix. 24), and as "a Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. cix. 4). Therefore He could not be a Priest according to the order of Aaron; on the contrary, He was to set us free from the Law of Moses, and so redeemed Himself with five shekels. "Unparalleled purchase, admirable ransom," exclaims St. Thomas of Villanova. Meanwhile let us consider that although He redeemed Himself from the Levitical Priesthood, He performed a great sacerdotal act when, as the "Perfecter of the Faith," He fulfilled the prophecies of Aggeus and Malachias. In those prophecies He Himself promised to come as the God-Man to His Temple, to institute a new Priesthood, purified with care, as gold and silver are refined; that is, rendered noble and precious by charity and chastity, so that sacrifices should be offered to the Lord in justice (Mal. iii. 3). Let us then meditate on the dignity and the duties of our Priesthood. Have we the justice requisite for celebrating Holy Mass? Have we the gold of charity, the silver of chastity?

3. *A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.* Jesus Christ is the Head of the Predestinate, both because His Name is the first registered in the Book of Life (Ps. xxxix. 8), and also because He is "the cause of eternal salvation to all the Elect" (Heb. v. 9); and in offering this august Head in the Temple of the earthly Jerusalem, Mary indicated that He would offer His members in "the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Church of the First-born" (Heb. xii. 23). Therefore after having offered Her Son, She offered "a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons." She would show us by this, that after having offered Her first-born Son, She offered mankind, composed of "soul and body," men who must enter heaven either with the innocence of the pigeon, or with the lamentations of penitence, expressed by the moans of the turtle-dove; and She will more especially offer to Heaven those Priests who have led either the active life indicated by the pigeon, who loves companionship, or the contemplative life of which the turtle-dove, who loves to dwell alone, is a symbol. So Venerable Bede. Moreover, the Evangelist does not tell us which of these birds was really offered by Mary to point out that She will offer to God both active and contemplative Religious, and to show that the Priesthood should combine both. Let us then pray to the Blessed Virgin, that after this our exile, She may offer us in our Heavenly Country, and cause us to merit it by the perfect exercise of both the active and the contemplative life.

"O Mary, bring us with gladness and rejoicing; bring us into the temple of the king."—*Ps.* xliv. 16.

"Bring us into the House of the Lord."—*Jeremias* xxxv. 2.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

THE MEDITATION OF ECCLESIASTICS.

. THE MATTER OF THE MEDITATION.
. CO-OPERATION WITH GRACE, IN ORDER TO MEDITATE WELL.
. AS TO THE METHOD, IN ORDER TO SUCCEED WELL.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man ;, and sowed in his field."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 31.

. *A grain of mustard-seed.* The Holy Fathers interpret the in of mustard-seed in three senses, each of which might well matter for the meditations of Ecclesiastics. First, it signifies rist, Who, says St. Gregory, was planted in the burial-place of garden, and rose up a great and majestic tree. "Looking on us, the Author and Finisher of faith, Who having joy set before n, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. xii. 2), is the first ject of most useful meditations; hence St. Augustine said, lways meditate on Christ . . . dedicate the first-fruits of thy ils to Christ." In the second place, it signifies, according to Jerome, the Holy Scriptures, which lead to life. We should e a maxim, a dogma, an example, and ponder their truth, un- ling it, and applying it to ourselves by the light of faith, in er that we may see the plant of a truly sacerdotal life spring in our souls. Finally, this grain of mustard-seed represents Disciples of the Nazarene, the Apostles and Saints, who are led a very small seed, and who, in the eyes of the world, were ıkest of all, and least of all; but nevertheless, says St. Chry- tom, because of the great power that was in them, it hath been

unfolded in every part of the world. Let us meditate then on their life, their virtues, their maxims: "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Heb. xiii. 7). How great is the liberality of Almighty God in providing us with the means of salvation; how little do we profit by them!

2. *Which a man took.* Man has not this grain of mustard-seed in himself, he must "take it" from Heaven: "A man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from Heaven" St. John iii. 27). What we meditate upon is the Word of God; to believe it, to understand it, to apply it to ourselves, is a heavenly grace; mental prayer, says St. Thomas, belongs to that Gift of the Holy Spirit, which is called, "the Gift of Piety;" but our co-operation is necessary, and therefore in Holy Scripture and in the Writings of the Fathers this prayer is forcibly enjoined. It is sufficient to remember that the Apostle wrote to Timothy, and in his person addressed these words to every Priest: "Meditate upon these things, be wholly in these things" (1 Tim. iv. 15); and St. Bernard wrote to a Pontiff, that, without Meditation, the whole edifice of the Priesthood would be but a heap of dust, the sport of every wind. This shows that our co-operation is necessary, and therefore contemplation, of which Mary Magdalene is the figure, was called by our Saviour a part chosen by herself: "Mary hath chosen the best part" (St. Luke x. 42). Let us reflect also that our Saviour said, "which a man took," to indicate that man alone is capable of meditation, and has need of meditation, for his knowledge is *discursive*, says St. Thomas. Hence if the mind of a Priest is exercised in meditation as becomes a "man of God," he prays to God with a fervour worthy of his sacred character, says St. Chrysostom.

3. *And sowed in his field.* He who intends to sow must carefully consider the time, place, and manner of sowing; and he must do the same who would meditate on the words of the Divine Wisdom with profit: "Come to Her (Wisdom) as one that plougheth, and soweth, and wait for Her good fruits" (Eccli. vi. 19). Therefore let us choose the first-fruits of the day for our mental prayer, and let us say with the Psalmist, "I will meditate *on Thee in* the morning" (Ps. lxii. 7). Let us make choice of our

own room for this purpose: "be sorry for them upon your beds" (Ps. iv. 5); nor should we forget our Saviour's teaching: "Enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret" (St. Matt. vi. 6). Let us provide ourselves with good books, to smooth the way for this salutary exercise, and let us implore the Spirit of Prayer, remembering what Peter of Blois says, that "Priests should be vessels of contemplation." Following St. Bonaventure's advice, let us not suffer the opportunity to escape us—that is, the time in which we are free from worldly affairs, and let us listen to the voice of God inviting us. Love cannot be enkindled in us without devotion, and we shall not have devotion without meditation, which "is necessary," says St. Thomas, "for meditation is the cause of devotion."

"Let the meditation of my heart be always in Thy sight."—*Ps.* xviii. 15.

"I will cry like a young swallow, I will meditate like a dove."—*Isa.* xxxviii. 14.

MONDAY.

MENTAL PRAYER PROMOTES THE SPIRITUAL PROFIT OF ECCLESIASTICS.

I. IT ENKINDLES CHARITY IN THEM.
II. IT MAKES THEM GROW IN ALL VIRTUES.
III. IT LEADS THEM TO PERFECTION.

"Which is the least indeed of all seeds, but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 31.

1. *Which is the least indeed of all seeds.* The little grain of mustard-seed contains within itself a burning strength, which Cornelius à Lapide calls an emblem of the Gospel maxims, on which meditation is made. Now St. Ambrose says that this seed

is small, mean, and despicable, without savour, scent, or sweetness; and its strength is only developed by rubbing and bruising it. In like manner the Gospel maxims will not profit us unless we ponder them seriously; but the more we meditate upon them, the more we break them up as it were by considerations, the greater will be the fire of love enkindled in each one who partakes of them. When Jesus speaks to our heart in meditation, and explains the Scriptures to us, then will divine love burn in our hearts, as it did in the disciples going to Emmaus (St. Luke xxiv. 32). The Psalmist says: "My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out" (Ps. xxxviii. 4); and St. Augustine interprets these words as having especial reference to Priests, as the Psalmist puts them in the mouth of him "whom his Lord hath appointed over his family," to give meat to his fellow-servants.

2. *But when it is grown up.* Philosophers grow in knowledge by assiduous study, but when their maxims are grown up they show no pungent nor vital power; they wither, or come but to herbs and grass, says St. Jerome. Not so the virtues of the Priest; they ought to grow and spread, and become great, for the ornament and edification of the Church. Without meditation, virtues can neither make progress nor develop themselves, so that it is a truth taught by all masters of the spiritual life, that "all spiritual perfection proceeds from meditation." Meditation regulates the affections, directs the actions, restrains excesses, and so leads to true profit, says St. Bernard. Without this aid it is easy to fall into sin, instead of making progress in virtue; for, says St. Cyprian, continual prayer is necessary, lest we fail of the Heavenly Kingdom. Hence in order to avoid guilt in discharging the functions of their Ministry, good Priests are wont to recollect themselves continually, to meditate, and to recommend themselves to God; and as St. Gregory remarks, they ever studiously betake themselves to the secrets of their own heart. If we had never abandoned meditation, how great progress should we not have made in the spiritual life?

3. *It is greater than all herbs.* To be greater than other plants *signifies to surpass* them in holiness, for St. Augustine says, when

you shall have become holy, then will you be great. Now it behoves Priests to see that their holiness surpasses the holiness of laymen, even as Saul far surpassed all the people in stature. St. Dionysius says, that in the Priest is required a perfection which shall as far as possible raise him to the likeness of God; and how can we attain this perfection, this likeness, this sanctity, without mental prayer? Without meditation, says Gerson, no one can attain to the right rule of the Christian religion, except by a special miracle of God. St. Aloysius Gonzaga rightly said, that no soul could attain great virtue without earnest study of Prayer; and he learnt this from St. Ignatius, who called mental prayer "the short way to arrive at perfection." He who neglects it, instead of going on to perfection, goes to ruin; for, says St. Alphonsus, such an one little knows his own defects or the danger of losing divine grace; little knows the means for overcoming temptation, little knows even the necessity of prayer, so he will leave off praying, and having left off praying will certainly be lost. Let us make a firm resolution never to leave off mental prayer, and let us implore the Blessed Virgin, whose especial privilege it was, never to have Her thoughts turned away from God, to obtain for us grace to keep this salutary resolution.

"I will meditate on all Thy works, and will be employed in Thy inventions."—*Ps.* lxxvi. 13.

"I will meditate on Thee day and night, and do all things that are written in Thy Law."—*Josh.* i. 8.

SIXTH TUESDAY.

MEDITATION HELPS ECCLESIASTICS IN THE CARE OF SOULS.

I. To support Apostolic labours.
II. To teach mental prayer.
III. To guide others towards Heaven.

"And becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 32.

1. *And becometh a tree.* The Lord planteth the Priest in His Church, as if to make him a plentiful olive tree, "fair, fruitful, and beautiful" (Jer. xi. 16). This tree ought to resist the most impetuous winds which seek to uproot it; that is, he must resist the persecutions and temptations which oppose themselves to the work of his ministry; therefore he must be "a tree great and strong" (Dan. iv. 8). Now this tree cannot grow unless it be "a tree which is planted near the running waters," that is, if he do not "meditate day and night" (Ps. i. 2, 3). He will grow and become strong only when sprinkled with the water of salutary Wisdom in meditation, says St. Cyprian. Adversity casts down the Priest who neglects mental prayer, but invigorates him who, amidst his Apostolic labours finds time to raise his mind to God, to ask His help, and that he may rightly estimate the great value of tribulations; such an one, strengthened in the spirit will be able to bear not only his own burdens, but the burdens also of others, to suffer any adversity whatsoever, and to resist the devil and his temptations. So St. Lawrence Justinian.

2. *So that the birds of the air came.* Souls who would fly to Heaven, and who, desiring to contemplate heavenly things, say *with the* Apostle, "we look not at the things which are seen,

but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. iv. 18), come to Priests; and these must be taught how to make their meditation, it must be enjoined them, they must give account of it, we must say to them, with St. Augustine, "If then thou criest, cry inwardly where God heareth." We must make them understand, as St. Gregory teaches us, that "true beseeching does not lie in the accents of the lips, but in the thoughts of the heart;" we must persuade them that mental prayer is what St. Ephrem calls it, "a worship pleasing to God." Nor need we fear that the unlearned are incapable of meditating, for the most ignorant of men, as well as the most wicked, can meditate if they choose: "he hath devised iniquity on his bed" (Ps. xxxv. 5); "they studied deceits all the day long" (Ps. xxxvii. 13). If each one can meditate on his own important affairs, why can he not meditate on the most important affair of all, that is, on eternity? Therefore the Supreme Pontiff, Benedict XIV., in the Bull, Quemadmodum, 16 Dec. 1746, grants a Plenary Indulgence, on the usual conditions, and applicable to the souls in Purgatory, once in the month, to all who shall daily make at least a quarter of an hour's mental prayer; also to whosoever, either in public or in private, shall often teach the manner of making it, as well as to those who learn how to make it; further, he grants an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantaines each time that any one being truly penitent, and having communicated, shall teach, or shall assist at instructions on the manner of meditating. Now, can a Priest be capable of teaching mental prayer, can he be zealous in propagating this exercise, if he does not practise it, if he does not give the example of practising it? Is it likely that he will love the souls of others better than his own?

3. *And dwell in the branches thereof.* The faithful would fain lean on Priests, follow them, receive spiritual direction from them. They say to us: "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zach. viii. 23). They desire to rest upon us, says St. Augustine, in order that they may save themselves from being engulphed by the waves of this world, that they may cover themselves with our shadow, and so escape the scorching fires of Hell. Now, how can we guide souls if we are

not accustomed to treat with God in solitude? We ought to imitate Moses, who, as St. Gregory observes, often spoke with God, and then spoke to the people. St. Lawrence Justinian teaches us that Priests ought to come with thirsty souls, and with assiduous prayer, and draw from the treasures of Divine Wisdom the rules of a Christian life, so that afterwards in the Pulpit and in the Confessional they may utter words of life and precepts of salvation. We have the truth which demands of us meditation, and charity which exacts from us labour, and we must conciliate the rights of each, so as not to lose the delights of truth, nor let ourselves be oppressed by the labours of charity. So St. Augustine. This is a great precept, worthy of being well weighed, and faithfully carried out.

"My prayer shall be turned into my bosom."—*Ps.* xxxiv. 13.

"Grant, O Lord, that nothing may hinder me from praying, and let me not be afraid to be justified even to death."—*Eccl.* xviii. 22.

WEDNESDAY.

THE LITTLE PROFIT SOME PRIESTS DERIVE FROM DAILY COMMUNION.

I. THE EUCHARIST IS THE SACRED LEAVEN.
II. IT OUGHT TO OPERATE HOLINESS IN PRIESTS.
III. WHY THIS IS NOT ALWAYS THE CASE.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 33.

1. *The Kingdom of Heaven is like to leaven.* In this passage, under the name of leaven, the Holy Fathers understand, not only the preaching of the Gospel, and the Preachers, but also Christ *Himself.* For, as He is compared to the "grain of wheat" (St.

John xii. 24), He may also be fitly compared to the "leaven" which is made from this grain. In His humility, says St. Ambrose, He appeared little, and in His Passion He suffered Himself to be shaken and loosened like leaven, in order that His juice, that is, His Blood, might give savour to the whole mass of the human race. Priests partake daily of this Leaven, and It ought to change them, It ought to incorporate them and transform them into Itself, making of them the same flesh, and the same spirit. Jesus Christ being charity itself, He would clothe all their works with charity, and make charity the true leaven which should give them heavenly savour. How greatly have many Priests profited by daily mass, whose memory is in benediction! How do many Priests in these days sanctify themselves by this means, and why do not I follow their example?

2. *Which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal.* This woman, who hides the leaven, mixing it with three measures of meal, "is Wisdom," says St. Augustine; and St. Jerome explains that Priests who allow themselves to be guided by Wisdom make their profit of the Eucharist for the sanctification of three things—the superior part of the soul, the inferior, and the body: "The spirit, the soul, and the body;" or the reasonable, the irascible, and the concupiscible faculties, so that the reason may be ruled by prudence, anger directed against vice, and the appetite inclined to virtue. They have experienced, and do experience, the proper effect of this Sacrament, by means of which the three powers of the soul, all the senses of the body, all the actions of life, are animated by charity; so that man, conforming himself to the "New Man," loves God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, says St. Augustine. Is this the condition of our soul, and if not, why do we not strive to attain it? How do we prepare ourselves for Mass? How do we celebrate? What graces do we seek from Jesus?

3. *Until the whole was leavened.* We ought to render ourselves a mystical loaf, worthy of God's Table; but this honour we cannot attain to without the operation of the Sacred Leaven. And why does not this leaven work in me? Because when I draw near to the Altar, I preserve some wicked leaven in my heart

which is opposed to the Divine Leaven. I have some passion still unmortified, some habit still unbroken, some venial sin still undetected: "Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. xi. 30). It may be there is a little leaven of hypocrisy. It must be removed: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (St. Luke xii. 1). It may be there is a little of the old leaven, that is, some vice inherited from the first Adam? It must be driven out: "Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste" (1 Cor. v. 7), for a "little leaven corrupteth the whole lump" (Gal. v. 9). Let us pray to our Lord Jesus Christ that this may not be our case, and that He would make us good leaven, as He made His Apostles, who leavened the whole world. If twelve men, says St. Chrysostom, leavened the whole world . . . we, being so many . . . ought to be enough for ten thousand worlds.

"The Lord hath satisfied the empty soul, and hath filled the hungry soul with good things."—*Ps.* cvi. 9.

"Let us feast, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."—1 *Cor.* v. 8.

SIXTH THURSDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

IT IS A NOBLE OFFICE TO PREACH TO THE POOR.

I. The Ministry of Preaching is noble.
II. It is noble when exercised to the poor.
III. When the Preaching is according to their capacity.

"All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes, and without parables He did not speak to them."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 34.

1. *All these things spoke Jesus.* We may infer how honourable is the ministry of the word, from the consideration that the Eternal Word came down from heaven, and made it His special occupation. He spoke, and the Father spoke by Him: "Who in these days hath spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. i. 1). He declared that He was sent upon earth expressly to preach: "I must preach the Kingdom of God, for therefore am I sent" (St. Luke iv. 43). Thus did He make known to us, says St. Ambrose, that the Son exercised the ministry of the word by the will of the Father, with the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, Who, on that account, appeared in the form of a Dove. Hence St. Thomas justly concluded, that to preach the Gospel is an employment truly noble, for it was an end of Christ's mission. Moreover, it is no small nobility to be Christ's ambassadors; for earthly princes confide this charge to noble personages, and so ennoble them the more. Now this is precisely the office of Preachers: "For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us" (2 Cor. v. 20); and, in a former meditation, we considered that Preachers have the office of Prophets. How, then, can some Priests disdain to exercise this office, either because of their

noble blood, or eminent talents, or distinguished rank? Let us pray to God to free us from such blindness.

2. *In parables to the multitudes.* Jesus Christ began His preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth by explaining a passage of Isaias in reference to Himself, and in which the various offices of the Messias were foretold (lxi. 1). Among them was this one: "To preach the Gospel to the poor" (St. Luke iv. 18). And in fact, says St. Bonaventure, He preached chiefly to the poor, He began His exhortations by giving the first Beatitude to the poor, and, by means of poor fishermen, He preached poverty to others. We know the predilection, the special care, that God has of the poor: "By reason of the misery of the needy, and the groans of the poor, now will I arise" (Ps. xi. 6). "He shall spare the poor and needy, and He shall save the souls of the poor" (Ps. lxxi. 13). "To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor, saith the Lord" (Is. lxvi. 2). Hence our Saviour "went about all the cities and towns" (St. Matt. ix. 35), seeking the salvation and instruction of the poor. And shall we consider ourselves dishonoured in following Christ's example? Shall we allow ourselves to be deceived on this point by the illusions and false maxims of the world? Rather let it be said of us, with St. Augustine, that, choosing the poor for our hearers in this world we are ennobled in Christ.

3. *And without parables He did not speak to them.* In speaking to the multitudes, our Saviour constantly made use of familiar examples, in order to give us a pattern of preaching, which does not pretend to shine by fanciful thoughts, bursts of eloquence, sublimity of style, and subtle choice of words. So Christ preached, and the Apostles faithfully followed His example, as we may observe in those discourses which the Holy Spirit has preserved for us in the "Acts of the Apostles." St. Paul often affirmed, that he preached in a familiar style, but at the same time it was full of spirit and efficacy. These words will suffice: "I came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom . . . and my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the spirit and power" (1 Cor. ii. 1, 4). *St. Gregory* says, that when our Saviour enjoined that the Dispenser of the word should give to each one his measure of spiri-

tual nourishment, He meant to signify, that he should adapt his teaching to the capacity of his hearers; so shall we aid Almighty God in the great work of the salvation of souls. St. Bernard calls Preachers "the coadjutors of God." If we act not thus, we shall fall into the most "puerile vanity," and, instead of presenting the truth in its native simplicity, we shall clothe it with a garment of lies, and merit the reproofs: "O children, how long will you love childishness?" (Prov. i. 22); "Why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?" (Ps. iv. 3). Let us repent if we have been guilty of this fault, and let us ask of God the true Ecclesiastical spirit, so that we may always abhor it.

"In Thy sweetness, O God, Thou hast provided for the poor; the Lord shall give the word to them that preach good tidings with great power."—*Ps.* lxvii. 11, 12.

"Lord, let it not be through me that the needy and the poor seek for waters, and there are none."—*Isa.* xli. 17.

FRIDAY.

THE DISCOURSES OF A TRULY APOSTOLIC PREACHER.

I. HE MAKES USE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.
II. HE DEVELOPS DOCTRINE WITH CLEARNESS.
III. HE ENLIGHTENS THE MIND IN ORDER TO MOVE THE HEART.

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 35.

1. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.* The parables of our Lord Jesus Christ were prophecies of incredible events, which were to be fulfilled in the establishment of the Church, the distribution of grace, and the correspondence of

man with grace. The Evangelist desires to point out that these prophecies, in the form of parables, had been formerly prophesied by David (Ps. lxxvii. 2), and in noting this, he followed our Saviour's example, Who frequently quoted the Holy Scriptures, in order to teach us to do the same.

This was also the practice of the Apostles, who, says St. Lawrence Justinian, drew what they preached from the most clear fountains of the Prophets. Hence St. Augustine tells us that the more sermons lean upon Holy Scripture, the wiser are they. These words have an efficacy all their own, through which, however rugged and simple they may seem to be, they give life to the hearers, says St. Chrysostom; and therefore, says St. Bonaventure, a good Preacher must appeal to Divine authority for all that he says, and upon this foundation he must build up his discourse.

2. *I will open My mouth in parables.* St. Thomas observes, that whereas the Lord had spoken to men, by His Prophets and by Himself, yet had He always spoken in parables, But now to Christians, who are "children of the light, called into His admirable light," He would have sound doctrine clearly announced, and would have them hear his voice without a veil of dark words: "speak ye in the light . . . preach ye upon the house tops" (St. Matt. x. 27). Of what avail is an elegant discourse, if the hearers do not understand it? What is the end of speaking, if not to make oneself understood? Do you suppose that Almighty God will not demand an account of the little profit derived from your sermons, owing to the obscurity of your language? St. Augustine says, in more than one place, that the Preacher ought to make himself understood by all, and if he cannot express himself in polished language to attain this end, he must make use of ruder words, for an unpolished word is a lesser evil than obscure speech. St. Zeno says the same. For the rest, if we wish to meditate on the characteristics of a good sermon, we shall find them in these words of St. Isidore: "A sermon ought to be pure, simple, plain, full of gravity and modesty, full of sweetness and grace." We must not preach for the learned only, we must preach "without respect of persons" (1 Pet. i. 17). We *must preach* for the people, who for the most part are ignorant

persons; at all events, as St. Augustine says, we find among them men of all kinds, learned and unlearned, townspeople and rustics. Have we hitherto preached with the view of making ourselves understood by all, or have we rather aimed at being admired? With what profit have our hearers gone away from the sermon? What remorse of conscience does a vain orator treasure up for himself!

3. *I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.* Jesus Christ, says St. Thomas, uttered from the depths of profound Wisdom, mysteries hidden from the beginning of the world. But the religion which He revealed must be continually taught by us: "which in other generations was not known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed" (Eph. xii. 5). We must make known the Incarnation of the Word, the mysteries which He has revealed, the laws which He has given, the rewards which He has promised, the punishments which He has threatened. The scope of our Preaching is to instruct the Faithful, to lead them to repentance of their sins and amendment of life, says St. Augustine; and let him who, in the Pulpit, does not propose these ends to himself, nor make use of fit means to attain them—let him tremble when he hears that Almighty God will exact an account of even one single soul lost through his fault: "When I say to the wicked: O wicked man, thou shalt surely die: if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked man from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but I will require his blood at thy hand" (Ezechiel xxxiii. 8). St. Alphonsus Liguori's "Method of Preaching" deserves to be carefully read and well weighed. Let us examine our conscience on this head, and let us pray to God that we may obtain that clearness and unction which were the characteristics of the saints, and which will be of immense advantage both to others and to ourselves.

"My mouth shall show forth Thy justice, Thy salvation all the day long."—*Ps.* lxx. 15.

"My lips shall be opened to preach right things."—*Prov.* viii. 6.

SIXTH SATURDAY.

MARY'S PRACTICAL FAITH A PATTERN FOR PRIESTS.

I. IN THE TRIALS TO WHICH THEIR FAITH IS EXPOSED.
II. IN THEIR LIFE, WHICH OUGHT TO BE CONFORMED TO IT.
III. IN THEIR DISCOURSES TO THE PEOPLE.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed . . . to leaven . . . I will utter things hidden."—*St. Matt.* xiii. 31, 33, 35.

1. *The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed.* The Blessed Virgin is called a grain of mustard-seed because of Her humility, says Albertus Magnus; for, in Her humility, She appeared little to Herself and to the world, whereas Her greatness, Her power, and Her merits extended over the universe, and She became a tree, greater than cedars or palms or plane-trees. Now all this greatness began from that little grain of mustard-seed, which God infused into Her heart from Her conception, from the grain of Faith; for, says St. Augustine, Faith is the grain of mustard-seed.

In Her this Faith was always growing, says St. Antoninus, since it was always producing new and more fervent acts. The same Faith shone forth in the severest trials; that is to say, when She instantly believed the words of the Archangel, which announced Her Divine Maternity without loss of Her Virginity, for it was by Faith that She conceived, says St. Bernard.

Moreover, Her Faith was exposed to unheard-of trials throughout the whole life of Her Divine Son, and in His most bitter Passion; for while Jesus appeared, "despised, and the most abject of *men," while,* because of the scandal of the Cross, Faith wavered

:n in the Faithful, Mary stood firm: "She, with perfect Faith, d Him to be God," says St. Bernard. My Faith also, O Virgin ıst clement, is exposed to hard trials, when I study Theology, en I read the objections of heretics, when I handle the ystery of Faith upon the altar, when I listen to the doubts of nitents; when I see that the life of the wicked is prosperous, : Spouse of the Nazarene, that is, the Church, ill treated, Her ıching despised, Her ministers persecuted. I fear lest I may of the number of those "who believe for awhile, and in time temptation fall away" (St. Luke viii. 13). To Thee do I fly, Mary, that I may obtain a Faith, which, like an anvil, may be engthened by the force of blows.

2. *Leaven.* The Blessed Virgin was that holy Leaven, which, ys St. Andrew, leavened the whole mass of mankind, making of one sole paste with the Body of Christ. She was that Leaven, ys St. Germanus, by which came to pass the new creation of dam; that is, the New Man. But She attained this great glory ecause She had a most perfect, practical Faith. She was "blessed ecause she believed;" nay, She was more blessed in the con-eption of the Faith, says St. Augustine, than in the conception of ıe Flesh of Christ. And in Her, this Faith was always practical, r it was the sole rule of all Her actions.

Let us also endeavour to live by Faith; that is, let not our eeds contradict our belief. Let us often make Acts of Faith; t us revive it in all our operations, and let us pray to God that may work by means of Charity. So will our holiness corre-ond with our office, for, says St. Augustine, he who believes ell, lives well.

3. *I will utter things hidden.* Not only was the Blessed Virgin erself a "hidden mystery," as St. John Damascene calls Her, .t She had also a more perfect knowledge of mysteries than all e Saints of the Old and New Testament. She spoke of them to e Apostles, and to the other Disciples of the Nazarene, and so ıttered things hidden" in the depths of Her heart. We Priests ght also to utter them, in instructing the ignorant, in convincing believers, in exhorting the Faithful to live according to their lief, in praying, writing, labouring in every possible way for the

propagation of the same Faith. So shall we conquer the Enemy of Mankind, and lead souls to Heaven. This Faith it is, says St. Leo, which conquers the Devil, and loosens the chains of his captives; this faith overcomes the world and brings us to Heaven. Let us meditate on that beautiful thought of St. Bernard, that Mary, bearing Jesus in Her womb, was a figure of Preachers, who bring Him forth in others, or rather bring forth others in Him. If we are like Her in this great office, let us strive to imitate Her in firmness of faith and in zeal.

"Teach me goodness, and discipline, and knowledge, for I have believed Thy commandments."—*Ps.* cxviii. 66.

"Blessed art thou that hast believed, increase our faith."—*St. Luke* i. 45; xvii. 5.

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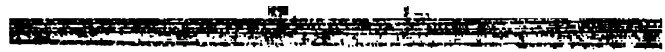

MEDITATIONS.

MEDITATIONS

FOR THE USE OF THE CLERGY,

For Every Day in the Year.

ON THE GOSPELS FOR THE SUNDAYS.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF MGR. SCOTTI, ARCHBISHOP OF THESSALONICA.

REVISED AND EDITED BY THE OBLATES OF ST. CHARLES.

VOL. II.

FROM SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY
TO THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

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SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

HE CALLING OF LABOURERS TO WORK IN THE MYSTICAL VINEYARD.

I. WHAT THE MYSTICAL VINEYARD IS.
II. THE CARE WHICH ALMIGHTY GOD TAKES OF IT.
III. HE RESERVES TO HIMSELF THE CALLING OF THE LABOURERS.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to an householder, who went out early in ? morning to hire labourers into his vineyard."—*St. Matt.* xx. 1.

1. *Into his vineyard.* This Vineyard may be taken to represent ıstice, as the source from which so many virtues are produced. ıt, according to the more common interpretation, it signifies the niversal Church. Our Maker (says St. Gregory) has a Vineyard, wit, the Universal Church. This Vineyard was planted by od Himself: "Thou hast brought a vineyard out of Egypt, thou ıst cast out the Gentiles and planted it" (Ps. lxxix. 9). Forerly it was the Synagogue, but now it is the Catholic Church: The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel" (Is. 7); and the Church has succeeded to the rights of ancient Israel ?om. ix. 6). A parent Vine has been planted in this Vineyard, true and most fruitful Vine; that is, Jesus Christ, Who said of ?imself, "I am the true Vine" (St. John xv. 1). From this ?autiful Vine spring innumerable branches, which, likewise, ıemselves become vines; and these are His disciples: "I am ıe Vine, you the branches" (St. John xv. 5). These branches, ıese vines, have filled the land . . . "It stretched forth its ranches unto the sea and its boughs unto the river" (Ps. lxxix.

10—12); and (as St. Augustine says) the value and perfection of the Vineyard consists in this boundless extension. Many of the vines are good, abounding in fruit; and these are just souls: "Thy wife is as a fruitful vine" (Ps. cxxvii. 3). The Church, however, is not composed of the just and elect only, but comprises also many sinners and reprobate; and thus many barren vines are found in the Vineyard, of whom it is said: "there is no grape on the vines" (Jer. viii. 13). Some are weak vines: "the vine hath languished away" (Isa. xxiv. 7); others bring forth wild grapes instead of grapes: "He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes" (Isa. v. 4). To which of these do I belong? what am I in the sight of the Lord of the Vineyard?

2. *Who went out early in the morning.* From the very beginning of the world Almighty God has shown the greatest care for this mystical Vineyard. When He planted the Synagogue, "He fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a wine-press therein" (Isa. v. 2); that is, He hedged it round with His law, and with the protection of the Angels; He placed therein a wine-press, that is, the Altar, where the blood of victims was shed; He removed stones of stumbling, that is, idols and other scandals; He built a tower, that is, He placed in it teachers, prophets, rulers, to defend the true Religion. But, in the fulness of time, He did far more than this: He took away the Vineyard from the unworthy labourers, and entrusted it to others, who were to render Him fruit in due season. Thus was fulfilled that awful but just threat: "He will bring those evil men to an evil end, and will let out His vineyard to other husbandmen" (St. Matt. xxi. 41). He has planted the Church by His own labours in the days of His flesh; He has placed in it the wine-press of His Blood; He has fenced it with His perpetual presence; He has built in it the tower of the supreme authority given to His Vicar. Hence He frequently speaks of this Vineyard to His Spouse (that is, to the Church herself) as the object of all His care. How great an honour, then, is it for us to enter this Vineyard, to be at once vines and labourers in it! Let us thank

Almighty God, Who has conferred so great honour and blessing upon us.

3. *To hire labourers.* St. Jerome observes, that Priests are represented under various titles and similitudes. We are the labourers, or the husbandmen; whilst the Eternal Father is the Lord of the Vineyard, the chief Husbandman: "My Father is the Husbandman" (St. John xv. 1). Justly, then, does He reserve to Himself the right of calling labourers into this Vineyard. No one can take this honour to himself, "but he that is called by God as Aaron was" (Heb. v. 4). Therefore St. Bernard exhorts us to consider carefully whether we have been called by God, and, if we find that we have not been called but have intruded ourselves into the Vineyard, to do penance. Is it not possible for God to work an entire change in us? As St. Bernard writes on this subject: Cannot God raise children to Abraham from these stones? Cannot God cause the good that ought to have gone before to follow after? Let us pray that such as have been called may be faithful to their vocation, and that those who have not been called may do penance.

"Look down from heaven, and see, and visit this vineyard, and perfect the same, which Thy right hand hath planted."—*Ps.* lxxix. 15, 16.

"They have made me the keeper in the vineyards, my vineyard I have not kept."—*Cant.* i. 5.

MONDAY.

THE WORK LAID UPON THE CLERGY AS REPRESENTED BY THE ALLEGORY OF THE VINEYARD.

I. To promote the good of the vineyard.
II. To root out evil from it.
III. To protect it against ravages.

"And having agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them unto his vineyard. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the market-place idle, and he said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just. And they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did in like manner."—*St. Matt.* xx. 2—5.

1. *He sent them into his vineyard.* He Who sends labourers into His Vineyard sends them to promote its well-being, to obtain fruit from it. He it is, Who said to the labourers: "I have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit" (St. John xv. 16). He sets before them, as their pattern, husbandmen and vine-dressers, who (as St. Bernard warns the clergy) are accustomed to labour hard, to prune, and to dig the ground. How indeed can that Vineyard bring forth fruit, which "shall not be pruned, shall not be digged"? (Is. v. 6). To prune the Vineyard signifies to remove defects and all that is unprofitable from the souls of men by promoting the spirit of penance. Zealous Priests do this by means of the Sacrament of Penance, and by preaching; for then "the time of pruning is come" (Cant. ii. 12). They dig, when they raise earthly hearts to Heaven by means of prayer, meditations, and other spiritual aids. Moreover, in

administering the Holy Eucharist and the other Sacraments, they strengthen the union of the good shoots with the parent-vine by causing them to partake of its sap; for: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (St. John xv. 4). Lastly, by labouring for the propagation of the Faith, we multiply its suckers: "multiply its fruits" (Ps. lxiv. 11). "Like a vine . . . her fruit and her branches have grown" (Ezech. xix. 10). So shall the Vineyard flourish and bring forth much fruit, and the Lord of the Vineyard shall say with joy: "the vines in flower yield their sweet smell" (Cant. ii. 13). But is this the condition of the Vineyard of my soul? Is this the condition of the souls committed to my care?

2. *Go you also into my vineyard.* It is not sufficient to have only labourers who do good to the Vineyard; some are required to remove evil. Thorns, which grow of themselves, must be rooted up: for "briers and thorns shall come up" (Isa. v. 6). Vices abound, says St. Gregory, in parishes and dioceses under the charge of slothful Pastors, precisely in the same way as thorns and nettles abound in the vineyard of the sluggard: "I passed by the vineyard of the foolish man, and, behold, it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof" (Prov. xxiv. 30, 31). In the second place, we must "catch the little foxes that destroy the vines" (Cant. ii. 15); that is to say, we must (as St. Augustine enjoins) drive away heretical writings, and men who spread abroad impious doctrine or give scandal by a licentious life. Again, we must take care that the Vineyard be not made desolate by the ravages of the wild boar, or of the fierce beast which devours it; that is, we must guard the Church from all the evil which the Devil, by his rage and malice, seeks to bring upon it; so that these words may not be fulfilled: "the boar out of the wood hath laid it waste, and a singular wild beast hath devoured it" (Ps. lxxix. 14). He strives to set it on fire, and to cast it down into the abyss; that is, he would have it either devoured by the fire of concupiscence or depressed by fear and despair. Are we driving away all these evils from our own souls? Are we duly solicitous in hindering them from

coming upon the Church? Rather, might we not say: "My vineyard I have not kept"? (Cant. i. 5).

3. *Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour.* The care which Almighty God has of faithful souls, and of well-ordered parishes and dioceses, justifies Him in abandoning to their ruin those others which are ill-cultivated, fruitless, and evil, through the fault of their keepers. To these He says: "I planted thee a chosen vineyard . . . . how then art thou turned unto Me into that which is good for nothing, O strange vineyard?" (Jer. ii. 21). And behold the punishment: "I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will make it desolate . . . . and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it" (Isa. v. 5, 6). That is to say, such a vineyard shall be given up to be devastated by devils and trodden down by vicious men; neither shall the dew of grace in the Sacraments, nor the salutary waters of the Divine Word, descend upon it. Such abandonment was the punishment inflicted upon the Synagogue in the first instance, afterwards on seven hundred Churches of Africa, innumerable Churches of Asia, and many in Europe; of whom it might at one time be said: "Every man bringeth for the fruit thereof a thousand pieces of silver" (Cant. viii. 11). Even in these days, in some parts both of the old and new world, it would seem as if a similar abandonment were designed for many nations, among whom error is already insinuating itself and lying teachers and workers of iniquity are already triumphing. "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, therefore God shall send them the operation of error, to believe lying" (2 Thess. ii. 10). And the cause of this abandonment is the negligence of Pastors: "many pastors have destroyed My vineyard" (Jer. xii. 10). What account can they render to God? Alas! how great cause have we to fear, both for our own souls and for the souls of those entrusted to our charge!

"O Lord, cause me to plant Thy vineyard, and make it yield fruit of birth."—*Ps.* cvi. 37.

"Send labourers into Thy harvest."—*St. Luke* x. 2.

TUESDAY.

THE ECONOMY OF GRACE AND GLORY, IN REGARD TO EVANGELICAL LABOURERS, SHOWN IN THREE WAYS.

I. IN FREEING US FROM WEARINESS IN WORKING.
II. IN HUMBLING OUR PRIDE.
III. IN ANIMATING OUR HOPE.

"But about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing, and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them: Go ye also into my vineyard. When evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward: Call the labourers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first."—*St. Matt.* xxv. 6—8.

1. *About the eleventh hour he went out.* The Fathers teach that the labourers who were called at the eleventh hour are the Apostles and other Priests of the New Covenant; and therefore we should more particularly consider the circumstances of these labourers, as set forth by our Lord Jesus Christ for our instruction and comfort. It seems strange and paradoxical that the lord of the vineyard should choose to confine the cultivation of it to one day, and that, not satisfied with the labourers called at other hours, he should take some even at the eleventh hour; as though he could not have called them on the day following, so that their pay might have been in more exact proportion to their period of service. Mark this well, O Priest. Remember that your time of payment will be, as it were, in the evening of your life. And this, because Jesus Christ regards the life of man as a single day, in which he must work; and then comes the

night, that is death, in which man can no longer merit for eternity. "Are there not twelve hours of the day?" (St. John xi. 9). "The night cometh when no man can work" (St. John ix. 4). So would He make us understand that the labour is short, whilst the reward is eternal: "I have laboured a little, and have found much rest to myself" (Eccl. li. 35); in less than an hour will come the generous payment of thy hire: "for in working about her thou shalt labour a little, and shall quickly eat of her fruits" (Eccl. vi. 20). The Devil, on the contrary, speaks to us as an impostor, and as the father of lies; for, whilst he himself is bearing the weight of eternity, he would have us think that our labour is too tedious, the resistance of temptation too long a trial, and that, in the end, all will be without fruit. But our answer shall be: "No: for yet a little and a very little while, and it shall cease" (Isa. x. 25).

2. *Go ye also into my vineyard.* What profit could the lord of the vineyard derive from slothful men, whom no one had called to labour because of the small esteem in which they were held? What could he hope for, from one hour of their labour? This is indeed a most necessary Parable for humbling that pride which would destroy all the merit of our evangelical labours. We, in fact, are here pointed out under the shameful name of "slothful" men; for "he that followeth idleness shall be filled with poverty" (Prov. xxviii. 19); and in this way it is shown that our labours can bring no profit to our Lord. Let us ever remember that from the very stones God can raise up better labourers for His Vineyard than ourselves: "God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (St. Matt. iii. 9). Therefore, when Christ saw that some of the disciples left Him, He said to the Apostles: "Will you also go away?" (St. John vi. 68); by which words He would signify, that those who are called to the Apostolate receive benefit from Jesus rather than confer it; as Theophylact explains. St. Thomas also says that He spoke thus, that the Apostles might not be puffed up or suppose that Christ had need of them. What are our feelings when we perform some work in our Lord's Vineyard? What do we suppose ourselves to be in His sight? "If thou do justly, what shalt thou give him, or what shall he receive *of thy hand?*" (Job xxxv. 7).

3. *Beginning from the last.* What means this caprice of the lord of the vineyard in beginning his payment with the last called? It means this, that preference is shown to Priests in the matter of reward, and that they are the first to receive reward; for, besides health, and esteem, and temporal emoluments, they are the first to receive Divine light and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit: "The husbandman, that laboureth, must first partake of the fruits" (2 Tim. ii. 6). The Apostle here teaches that Priests, who are masters of the flock, are the first to be rewarded. St. Athanasius says that the teacher who labours and strives for himself and for his hearers is the first to receive reward from God; and if (as many of the Fathers explain it) Christ is the money agreed on, it is the privilege of Priests especially to receive Him and give Him to others. Good reason have we then to say: "All good things came to me together with her" (Wisdom vii. 11). Therefore let us renew our hope in that God from Whom we have received so great benefits; and, from our knowledge of the good things which He bestows upon us in this present life, let us take occasion to look for future blessings. Meanwhile, let us repent of the tedium and pride of which, perchance, we may have been sometimes guilty.

"See my abjection and my labour, and forgive me all my sins."—*Ps.* xxiv. 18.

"Grant that I may be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."—2 *Tim.* ii. 15.

WEDNESDAY.

THE AFFECTIONS OF GOOD LABOURERS.

I. LOVE.
II. CONFIDENCE.
III. HUMILITY.

"When therefore they were come, that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more, and they also received every man a penny. And receiving it they murmured against the master of the house, saying: These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heat."—*St. Matt.* xx. 9—12.

1. *And receiving it they murmured.* These murmurers, in whom some interpreters see a figure of the carnal Jews, had no love for their master, nor for their fellow-labourers, even when they received their hire. They are a lively image of those mercenaries who, as St. Gregory says, work not "from inward love;" they do not cultivate the Vineyard in order to please their Lord; while He has them ever in His sight and loves them more than the life of His own Son. "My vineyard is before me," saith He (Cant. viii. 12). They do not desire to see it abound in much spiritual fruit, in order to satisfy the longing wish of their Lord, Who earnestly desires that "the vine yield her fruit, and the earth give her increase" (Zach. viii. 12). Nor do they exert themselves to make the vines produce many branches and many shoots, so that, beholding the increase of the true Faithful, they may be able to say, in the joy of their heart: "It became a vine, and then into branches, and shot forth sprigs" (Ezech. xvii. 6). They do not *rejoice at the* good wrought by their fellow-labourers, nor at the

reward which they merit; but are eaten up with envy, which is "the rottenness of the bones" (Prov. xiv. 30). Sometimes they murmur against their Bishops, or even against God Himself, when they see benefices bestowed on other ministers of the Sanctuary; although the Apostle warns us: "Neither do you murmur, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer" (1 Cor. x. 10). Very different were the dispositions of the heart of this Apostle; for he rejoiced at hearing that Christ was preached even by his rivals, who thought by so doing to afflict him in his bonds. Hence he said: "So that by all means, whether by occasion or by truth, Christ be preached; in this also I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil. i. 18). Are we animated by such love as this in labouring in the Vineyard? Let us examine the secrets of our heart, and we may perchance find therein great corruption.

2. *These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us.* God's goodness to us, represented by the recompense so generously bestowed upon these labourers, ought to inspire us with confidence. If He has called us to the work, He Himself will sustain our strength, and will bless our labours: "he that ministereth seed to the sower, will both give you bread to eat, and will multiply your seed" (2 Cor. ix. 10). He will let us see the overthrow of the devil, who seeks to ruin the fruit of our land and to make the Vineyard sterile: "I will rebuke for your sakes the devourer, and he shall not spoil the fruit of your land, neither shall the vine in the field be barren" (Malachi iii. 11). Let us then labour with courage and confidence; for the evening is drawing nigh to us, death is approaching, and with it the hour of payment: "it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent" (St. Luke xxiv. 29). Hope in the Lord, and do what good thou canst, for thou shalt see the land which thou hast cultivated bear fruit, and thou shalt eat of its fruits. "Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches" (Ps. xxxvi. 3); and blessed shalt thou be, when "thou shalt eat the labours of thy hands" (Ps. cxxvii. 2).

3. *That have borne the burden of the day and the heat.* Those who spoke thus had a high opinion of their own labour and merit; but true evangelical labourers neither think nor speak in

this manner, but rather are continually saying: "We are unprofitable servants" (St. Luke xvii. 10). What good thing have I ever done? What have I that is mine? What have I, that I have not received from the Lord of the Vineyard? My life, my strength, my means, my goodwill itself—are not all these the gifts of God? "These I have from heaven" (2 Machabees vii. 11). Moreover, "neither he that planteth" the Vineyard "is anything, nor he that watereth, but God Who," by the inward working of His grace, "giveth the increase" (1 Cor. iii. 7). The labour of the husbandman can only be external, and supplementary to the inward working of his Master (as St. Augustine says); and, perchance, by thy self-love, thy ignorance, and thy imprudence, instead of co-operating with His salutary operations, thou hast marred them, injuring the Vineyard, and as it were saying: "I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees" (Osee ii. 12). Remember, in short, that the Lord of the Vineyard has need neither of the Vineyard nor of thee, but thou hast need both of the Vineyard and of the Lord of the Vineyard.

"Preserve me, O Lord, for I have put my trust in Thee; I have said to the Lord: Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods."—*Ps.* xv. 1.

"Direct Thy servant this day, and give him mercy."—2 *Esdras* i. 11.

THURSDAY.

THE REWARD OF GOOD LABOURERS.

I. THE NATURE OF THE REWARD.
II. ITS CORRESPONDENCE WITH JUSTICE.
III. IT IS INCREASED BY THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

"But he answering said to one of them: Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine, and go thy way: I will also give to this last, even as to thee. . . . Is thy eye evil because I am good?"—*St. Matt.* xx. 13—15.

1. *Thou didst agree with me for a penny.* The money agreed upon is the reward which Almighty God will bestow on those who have been good husbandmen in His Vineyard. Consider, O Priest (says St. Chrysostom), how great is this reward. Men, with all their efforts, could never recompense those who labour for them in the charity of the Gospel, says St. Augustine. To thee shall be given the money, which bears the image of the King; that is to say (as St. Jerome explains it), thy promised reward is that thou be transformed, from brightness to brightness, into the image and likeness of God. And, as the roundness of the penny is a symbol of eternity, this thy blessed transformation shall be eternal. Origen says that, while Adam merited this reward by cultivating the ground for nine hundred and thirty years, St. Paul likewise merited it (but in a far higher way) by cultivating Christ's Vineyard for an hour, that is, for a few years only. Imitate St. Paul, and thou shalt share in his eternal glory. St. Gregory says that good laymen, if they have cultivated the vineyard of their own soul, will receive the same penny; but (as

Bellarmine shows) they will not shine with the same glory nor with the same splendour; that is to say, their reward will be equal to that of Priests in its eternity, but not in its degree of glory. Consider seriously the reward, that thou mayest cheerfully endure the labour.

2. *I do thee no wrong.* St. Paul calls this money "a crown of justice" (2 Tim. iv. 8): therefore he who has not earned it has no right to expect it; for a labourer would be ashamed to present himself before his master and ask for his payment without having completed his work. Here let us consider, with Cornelius à Lapide, that the degree of merit corresponds to the degree of grace, and to the co-operation of our free-will with the same grace. We Priests have the grace of Order; we are most near to the fountain of grace, which is Jesus Christ; we partake daily of the Holy Eucharist, which preserves and increases grace. To all these advantages we may add the abundance of light which we receive in reading the Holy Scriptures and other books tending to the sanctification of the soul. We may add also the public prayers, to which we are bound, and which, besides the reward they merit in justice, obtain for us (says St. Thomas) other benefits from the divine liberality. Again we may add the endurance of those continual trials, both external and internal, which the exercise of our ministry calls forth; as St. Gregory points out. In this way it frequently happens that a Priest who has laboured in the Vineyard only a short time, but has shown greater earnestness in making use of such opportunities, surpasses in merit him who has laboured for many years without any fervour; for, says St. Jerome, a sudden glow of heat does more than long lukewarmness. These are great truths, set forth by Jesus Christ; and they should teach older labourers to retain their humility, and should kindle a holy ardour in the breast of those who fear that they have but a short time to work.

3. *I am good.* By these words our Saviour assures us that He is generous rather than just in rewarding the faithful labourers in His Vineyard, and that His bounty surpasses their merits and their desires. He looks upon their merits as the fruit of His *most precious* Blood shed for us, and therefore is He most liberal

in rewarding them. We feel a greater pleasure in conferring a free gift, with a view to our own honour, than in receiving what is due to us. Thus God gives freely to us, in order to honour His Son in Himself. Therefore let the Priests of the Lord rejoice, considering that, the more diligently they labour, so much the more "by good works they make sure their calling and election," as the Prince of the Apostles declares (2 Pet. i. 10)—let them rejoice, because they have so often received the Holy Spirit, "Who is the pledge of our inheritance" (Eph. i. 14)—let them rejoice in the daily participation of the Eucharist, in which "a pledge of heavenly glory is given to us;" and let them pray for final perseverance, which St. Augustine calls the "crown of all gifts and the seal of the Divine bounty."

"Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have hoped in Thee."—*Ps.* xxxii. 22.

"The time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldst render reward to Thy servants the prophets and the saints . . . is come."—*Apoc.* xi. 18.

FRIDAY.

THE DUTY OF PRIESTS DURING THE CARNIVAL.

I. To withdraw from its disorders.
II. To persuade others to withdraw themselves.
III. To pray for those who will not do so.

"So shall the last be first, and first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

1. *So shall the last be first.* Our great High Priest is "the First and the Last" (Apoc. xxii. 13). The world regarded Him as "despised and the most abject of men" (Isa. liii. 3), whereas He

holds "the primacy in all things" (Col. i. 18). Imitating His example, we ought to suffer ourselves to be looked upon as "the last" by the world, because we will not take part in its follies, but we ought to show ourselves "the first" in virtue, and especially by despising riotous diversions. St. Charles Borromeo enjoined his clergy to fortify their hearts firmly against the desire for empty shows, so as to abhor the sports and follies of the world. Otherwise, we should rashly expose our priestly virtue to the peril of shipwreck. The Priests of God (says the Council of Turin) should abstain from these things, because a crowd of vices is wont to enter the soul through the allurements of the eyes and ears. Moreover, as St. Chrysostom warns us, we should lose that time which we owe to God and to His Church, and our presence would give scandal to the spectators by encouraging their love for such perilous amusements. Let the Priest keep this great truth before his eyes,—that dissipation, worldly pomp, uproar, riotous intemperance, are hurtful to the soul in proportion to the delight they afford to the bodily senses. So St. Leo.

2. *And first last.* We are the first in rank among the people of God; but we shall find ourselves the last, if we fail in our duty of drawing away the faithful from the vanities and corruption of the world. Instead of the salt which seasons men's minds, we should then become "salt without savour," which merits only to be despised and "trodden on" (St. Matt. v. 13). Hence we are not at liberty to stand idle during those days in which sins most abound. "A wise man . . . in the days of sins will beware of sloth" (Eccles. xviii. 27). And what days can be more justly so called than the days of the Carnival, which Cornelius à Lapide says are "days of sinners, riotous days," and therefore are in some calendars justly styled "fools' days"? Holy Scripture praises the Priest who "in the days of sinners strengthened godliness" (Eccles. xlix. 4). Hence, during these days, zealous Priests are wont to excite the fervour of the Faithful in frequenting the churches, and to increase pious exercises, by way of offering to God a certain compensation for all the outrages which He suffers from worldlings. St. Francis of Sales used to make his spiritual exercises *during* these days, in order to give an example to devout persons,

and to spare himself the sight of the popular folly, which he had not power to restrain; and partly also to implore the mercy of God on the blind followers of the world. St. Charles Borromeo established special public prayers, Processions, and general Communions, during the three weeks before Lent; St. Almaco strove to hinder pernicious spectacles, not only by his words, but by shedding his blood; St. Philip Neri, and many other Priests, summoned the Faithful to the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: and thus, at this day, great numbers are led to despise the attractions of the Carnival and to worship their Lord rather than to follow the multitude to do evil. "I will leave me seven thousand men in Israel whose knees have not been bowed before Baal" (3 Kings xix. 18).

3. *Many are called, but few chosen.* How terrible is this sentence, so often repeated in Holy Scripture! What must be the reflection of a zealous priest, when he considers the number of the reprobate, a number which (says St. Jerome) cannot be computed. Priests (says St. Bernard) ought to be mediators of peace, consuming the sins of the people; their heart ought to be tender towards the blindness and wanderings of sinners: they should "have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err" (Heb. v. 2). We may excite this compassion in ourselves by considering that such revellings are a remnant of Paganism; they are inventions of idolaters, and we should leave them to idolaters: "let them go according to the desires of their heart" (Ps. lxxx. 13); they are artifices of the devil to lead souls to hell; for (says St. Chrysostom) he is a devil who has reduced plays and games to an art, so that by such means he may draw the soldiers of Christ to himself. What ought Priests to do? "Howl, ye shepherds, and cry" (Jer. xxv. 34); "Lament, O ye priests; howl, ye ministers of the altars" (Joel i. 13).

"Lo, I have gone far off and flying away, and I abode in the wilderness . . . for I have seen iniquity and contradiction in the city."—*Ps.* liv. 8—10.

"Thou hast saved me from destruction, and hast delivered me from the evil time."—*Eccl.* li. 16.

SATURDAY.

THE GREAT BENEFIT PRIESTS DERIVE FROM PROMOTING THE WORSHIP OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

I. SHE IS A MOST BEAUTIFUL VINEYARD.
II. SHE ENRICHES ALL WHO CULTIVATE HER.
III. SHE OFFERS HER FRUITS TO ALL.

"He sent them into his vineyard. . . . Go you also into my vineyard. . . . Why stand you here all the day idle?"—*St. Matt.* xx. 2, 4, 6.

1. *He sent them into his vineyard.* The Blessed Virgin is a type of the Church; and therefore, in the Canticle of Canticles, both are signified by the "garden enclosed" (iv. 12), and the "vineyard of God" (viii. 11), as Cornelius à Lapide points out. Nay more, as many of the Fathers aver, every holy soul, and especially the soul of virgins, is signified under the name of "Vineyard," and hence this title belongs in a peculiar manner to the Virgin of Virgins. Justly, therefore, is She called by an ancient writer, "the Vineyard made and planted by God;" for "she threw out her roots; that is to say, she began where the Patriarchs, her predecessors, found the limit of their virtues; immeasurably surpassing the faith and obedience of Abraham, the hope and patience of Isaac, the charity of Jacob, the humility of David." These he supposes to be but the roots of the Blessed Virgin, from which She began to put forth buds. Moreover, as a vineyard grows day by day, and is fertile both in roots and branches, so (he continues) did She grow from virtue to virtue, increasing more and more in all constancy and simplicity. Mary is the "Vineyard of the Peaceable"

spoken of in the Canticles, for She belonged wholly to the true Solomon, and the true Solomon is Jesus Christ; She alone among all vineyards, that is to say, among all souls, worthily corresponded to her heavenly cultivator; and, finally, from this Vineyard came forth the true Vine, Jesus Christ.

2. *Go you also into my vineyard.* St. Bernard considers that Almighty God, in sending labourers to cultivate this Vineyard, sent them, not as He does to other souls, to guard Her from sin, but to offer Her reverence and service. St. John, and St. Peter, head of the whole Church, were the first destined to this trust; to their keeping He entrusted Her: nay, all the Apostles were emulous in forming Her court and providing for Her of their goods, says the same Saint. We, who participate in the Priesthood of the Apostles, ought to honour Her in an especial manner, and, with St. Ephrem, to regard Her as the glory and joy of all Priests. Let us consider that, in cultivating this Vineyard, we honour the culture which She had from the Blessed Trinity; for, says the same St. Bernard, the spiritual cultivators of this Vineyard were Divine inspirations, the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Therefore (says St. Ildephonsus) let us love Her and venerate Her to the utmost of our power. We shall go from the cultivation of this Vineyard enriched with heavenly treasures, for in Her hands (says St. Peter Damian) are the treasures of God's mercy. He who cultivates Her will receive the reward of grace and of glory; he will be justified (says St. Bonaventure); but he who neglects Her will die in his sins.

3. *Why stand you here all the day idle?* If "idle" and, consequently, vicious persons are committed to our charge, let us lead them into this heavenly Vineyard, for all are admitted there, none are driven away; to all She gives most sweet grapes (says St. John Damascene), pouring out nectar to men. Bartholomew of Pisa says, this is the elect Vineyard, which gives forth that healing balsam (*i.e.*, Christ) whereby our souls are healed and preserved from corruption. In short, sinners will find in Mary their refuge and their advocate. St. Augustine says that through Her we hope for the pardon of our offences, and St. Germanus says that the most incurable wounds will find in Her certain remedy.

St. Clement of Alexandria tells us that even babes in the Christian life will find all their nourishment in Mary. Happy is the Priest who is truly devout to Mary, and who enkindles this devotion in others; he will save himself and them. Let us often call to mind Her promise: "They that work by me shall not sin, they that explain me shall have life everlasting." (Eccl. xxiv. 3).

"O Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid."—*Ps.* cxv. 16.

"The hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore thou shalt be blessed for ever."—*Judith* xv. 11.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

JESUS CHRIST THE TRUE PREACHER.

I. He came into the world to preach.
II. He ceases not to be a Preacher.
III. He derives the materials of His preaching from Himself.

"And when a very great multitude was gathered together and hastened out of the cities unto Him, He spoke by a similitude: The sower went out to sow his seed."—*St. Luke* viii. 4, 5.

1. *Went out.* Who is He who "went out"? He is the Son of man, Who "came forth from the Father, and is come into the world" (St. John xvi. 28). He came forth without change of place, says St. Chrysostom; only drawing nearer to us by taking mortal flesh. He said of Himself that He came into the world for the very purpose of testifying to the truth (St. John xviii. 37), and therefore (as Venerable Bede says in commenting on this passage) He could most justly call Himself the Sower. For this end He went about all Judæa, to which He was especially sent, in order to *fulfil the* promises made by God to that nation; as St. Thomas

points out. He wrote nothing, but spoke only; as befitted the excellence of the Teacher, and the excellence of His teaching. He lived for thirty-three years and three months (a number of mystical significancy), preaching for the last three years and three months. He proved His mission by prophecies and miracles. Preaching cost Him His life, because it was the "sign" which was to be "contradicted" (St. Luke ii. 34). But, though He came forth from the Father, He spoke no other than the "things He had heard" (St. John xv. 15), and He was always "in the Father, and the Father in Him" (St. John xiv. 11). What a lesson for sacred orators! They too should come forth from God—that is, they must have due mission; they should come forth from communion with Him in prayer, and at the same time seek to be ever united to Him by sanctifying grace. So should the missionary go forth from his home and country, like unto Him Who (says St. Jerome) went forth from His home to sow good seed among the multitudes.

2. *The sower.* Jesus Christ did not sow once only; and therefore He says not "He who *sowed.*" He ceases not to sow the seed of His Word in our souls by means of His ministers (says Theophylact) and hence the Apostle said well, that "Christ was speaking in him" (2 Cor. xiii. 3). He remembered Christ's words: "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me" (St. Luke x. 16); the reason of which is (says Venerable Bede) that the Master is heard in the disciple, the Father is honoured in the Son. And let us take notice that our Saviour says, "the *Sower*," not "the *Sowers*," because it is He alone who preaches, just as it is He alone who baptizes (as St. Augustine points out), although He preaches and baptizes by means of many ministers. How great must be the dignity of the Priest to preach in the name of Jesus, to be the organ of Jesus, and to be united with Him in this office! Thus many Fathers of the Church have applied to Priests the words of the Psalm: "I have said, You are gods" (lxxxi. 6). But does our life correspond to so great a dignity? Let us examine ourselves at the feet of our crucified Lord; let us not suffer ourselves to be deceived by self-love; let each of us ask himself, "What sayest thou of thyself?"

3. *To sow his seed.* Let us admire the fitness of this expression. Christ did not sow the word taken from another, for He Himself is by nature the Word of the living God; but such is not the case with other preachers. Their word is not their own: they have received it from Christ. Christ had no need of school or study; and therefore the Jews exclaimed: "How doth this man know letters, having never learned?" (St. John vii. 15). But this is not our case: schools and study are necessary for us. Surely (as Gregory the Great remarks), if physicians must learn the art of medicine before they practise it, so also he who would heal souls must first devote himself to the study of spiritual remedies. The Apostle admonishes the Priest to be "embracing that faithful word which is according to doctrine" (Titus i. 9); and St. Thomas explains this word "embracing" as signifying a close application of heart and mind to the study of spiritual science.

Let us then fear God's menace: "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee, that thou shalt not do the office of Priesthood to Me" (Osee iv. 6); let us never leave off the study of subjects proper to our state; and, as "the rational of judgment, doctrine, and truth" was to be on Aaron's breast (Ex. xxviii. 30), so let us keep Christian doctrine and truth continually in our heart.

"Blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shall teach him out of Thy law."—*Ps.* xciii. 12.

"O Lord, give rain to Thy seed, wheresoever Thou shalt sow in the land; and the bread of the corn of the land shall be most plentiful."—*Isa.* xxx. 23.

MONDAY.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER A SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRIESTS.

I. IT JUSTIFIES GOD.
II. IT CONDEMNS THE REPROBATE.
III. IT IS A SUPPORT TO PREACHERS.

"And as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it, choked it. And other some fell upon good ground, and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundred-fold. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."—*St. Luke* viii. 5—8.

1. *And as he sowed.* God is Justice itself, and yet there are not wanting men who blaspheme His justice, and spread abroad their impious doctrines: "they have set their mouth against heaven, and their tongue hath passed through the earth" (Ps. lxxxii. 9); they cast the blame of their iniquity, of their obstinacy, of their eternal damnation, upon God. But the present Parable, duly considered, closes their mouth: "all iniquity shall stop her mouth" (Ps. cvi. 42); for here we behold Jesus Christ "coming out to sow" His divine word, which is "the fountain of wisdom" (Eccl. i. 5) and of life. He goes about, like Joseph, seeking His brethren, to "bring back word of them" to His Father (Gen. xxxvii. 13); but how do they receive Him? He sows His seed about the earth without stint, and in so doing is content (as St. Thomas shows) to appear ignorant and prodigal, because He sows it where it cannot produce fruit. And this He does, *to show us that He* "will have all men to be saved, and

to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4); to prove that He "hath no pleasure in the destruction of the living" (Wisdom i. 13); and as a sign, moreover, that He is covetous only in regard to souls and for our salvation; as St. Augustine tells us. Behold how Divine Justice justifies herself! Let us also, who are Her sons, justify Her, so that "Wisdom" may be "justified by all Her children" (St. Luke vii. 35). Let us strive to be children of Wisdom and the Church of the just, intent on defending Her, obeying Her, and making others obey Her: "The sons of Wisdom are the church of the just, and their generation, obedience and love" (Eccl. iii. 1).

2. *And other some fell*, &c. Behold here the condemnation of the reprobate. The evil disposition of their heart is the sole and true cause of the fatal loss of the heavenly seed. The Angelic Doctor observes that they present a threefold impediment to the fructifying of the seed. The disposition of their heart is not like good ground; but is like the highway, like a rock, or like thorny ground; and they have employed neither the memory, nor the love, nor the care, requisite in order to make it yield fruit. On the contrary (continues St. Thomas), they have placed obstacles in its way; namely, dissipation of mind, hardness of heart, and vices; and so have they destroyed every germ of good. But this is all the fault of the human will; for dissipation is voluntary, hardness is the punishment of an evil will, and thorns are a deliberate attachment to earthly goods. Further, this Parable points out to us how the devil contributes to the perdition of souls; for he is the bird which devours the seed; that is (says St. Bonaventure), by his suggestions he takes away the word from men's recollection. The world also does its part in multiplying the thorns; that is (continues the same Saint), it sets before us three kinds of transitory pleasure, viz., from within, from without, from beneath. Moreover, the word of the Lord has been heard over the whole earth, "but all do not obey the Gospel." Yet, "have they not heard?" (Rom. x. 16, 18). Had not human malice directed all its forces against the propagation of the Faith and the sanctification of souls, the Catholic religion would be spread over the *whole world*, and all Catholics would be Saints. The cause,

therefore, of so many being reprobate is that pointed out by the Gospel: "Men loved darkness rather than the light" (St. John iii. 19). Let us mourn over this most miserable condition; let us live in fear and trembling, lest it be our lot.

3. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* Who, better than preachers, can have ears capable of hearing these sublime lessons? When they have been taught the meaning of this Parable, they can hear it; that is to say, they can understand it; for (says St. Basil) to hear belongs to the understanding. Let us consider, then, that in this Parable Jesus Christ fortifies them against three enemies, viz., sloth, vanity, and cowardice. No one should find it irksome to toil and labour in sowing the seed in unfruitful places; for Jesus Christ, the great Sower, has done it before us. And then (as St. Chrysostom remarks) although He, Who foresees all things, knew that many of His hearers would perish, He did not on that account leave off preaching. He fortifies them against vanity; for if they derive fruit from their preaching, they must ascribe it to Him, Who blesses the earth, and Who disposes men's hearts so that they become a fruitful soil. Lastly, this Parable is an encouragement to Priests not to despond if they see the seed in great part lost, provided it be not by their own fault; for (says St. Chrysostom) the perishing of the seed is rather from the earth which receives than from him who sows. Let us then prepare ourselves with great ardour for preaching during the approaching Lent; let us pray to Almighty God to prepare the soil, and likewise to cleanse our heart and our lips with the fire of charity, even as He purified the lips of the Prophet Isaias with the burning coal from the altar.

"That thou mayst be justified in thy words, and mayst overcome when thou art judged."—*Ps.* l. 6.

"Thou indeed, O Lord, art just if I plead with Thee."—*Jeremias* xii. 1.

TUESDAY.

KNOWLEDGE INCREASES THE GUILT OF SINFUL PRIESTS.

I. IT AGGRAVATES THE MALICE OF THEIR SIN.
II. IT DEPRIVES THEM OF THE EXCUSE OF IGNORANCE.
III. IT RENDERS THEIR CONVERSION DIFFICULT.

"And His disciples asked Him what this parable might be. To whom He said: To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing may not understand."—*St. Luke* viii. 9.

1. *To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.* This Parable is called "the mystery of the kingdom of God," because it develops those great truths which relate to the formation of the kingdom of God in its threefold aspect; viz., in our own hearts—in this world; that is, in the Church on earth—and also in eternity; that is, in the heavenly Jerusalem. Here is also set forth the gradation of merits amongst the elect, the falling away from the Faith of some who are reprobate, and the perseverance of others. Thus we have in outline a representation of the whole Mystery of the kingdom of God. Hence to know this is (as St. Thomas points out) a great favour conferred on Priests; and if they profit not by this advantage—if, after having heard the will of their Lord, they despise it — if they teach it to others without giving them an example of keeping it—how grave will be their sin, how great the displeasure of their Lord! Grievous indeed (as St. Ambrose says) is the sin of those who *know the* law and do it not. The greater the knowledge, the *greater the* condemnation. As they have light now to see the

guilt of the sin to which they still cling, so will their punishment be the more terrible hereafter. Terrible are Christ's words, and worthy of profound meditation: "That servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (St. Luke xii. 47).

2. *But to the rest in parables.* The laity have, for the most part, an obscure knowledge of eternal truths; many things in religion are enigmas to them; they often are in error as regards the laws of God; many doctrines of the faith are like parables to them. This, says St. Chrysostom, is the penalty of original sin, and therefore they have in some respects an excuse if they do evil. In their favour it may often be pleaded, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (St. Luke xxiii. 34). It is well known that our Saviour made this prayer for the people rather than for the Priests, because, as St. Thomas shows, the latter had greater light to know the Son of God. St. Chrysostom says that the Priest's duty is to correct the ignorance of others; but to plead ignorance on his own account would be a fresh accusation against himself. Jesus Christ has treated him as His friend, revealing to him His Father's secrets: "I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you" (St. John xv. 15). This was the true mark of His friendship; for (as St. Thomas says on this passage) it is the sign of true friendship when a friend reveals the secrets of his heart to a friend. Now God makes us partakers of His Wisdom in revealing His secrets to us. What excuse shall we have if we are found to have despised so great a favour, and if the friendship of God has neither moved us to love Him nor restrained us from offending Him?

3. *That seeing they may not see, and hearing may not understand.* Behold the punishment of impenitent Priests. They approach near to the sacred Mysteries, they hear and read the Word of God continually; but they remain spiritually blind and deaf. As St. Thomas says, they see only outward things, and hear the word, which ought to stimulate them in their spiritual course, as if they heard it not. In other words, their affections are deadened. Hence the supreme difficulty of converting a sinful Priest. The

most awful thunders of Divine menaces wake him not from his lethargy (says St. Bernard); they avail not to make him fear. Nothing is so difficult as to produce amendment in that man who knows all things, and yet despises the good and loves the evil. Such persons sin with full advertence, and cast themselves alive into the abyss of iniquity, because they know evil and do it; for (says St. Gregory) they who know evil and yet do it, throw themselves, alive and with full consciousness, into the depths of hell. My God, have pity on me! Deliver me from this abyss of misery!

"I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; seek Thy servant because I have not forgotten Thy commandments."—*Ps.* cxviii. 176.

"We have sinned, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and have revolted."—*Dan.* ix. 5.

WEDNESDAY.

DISSIPATION OF MIND INJURIOUS TO PRIESTS.

I. IT IS AN OBSTACLE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIVINE SEED.

II. IT EXPOSES THE SEED TO BE TRODDEN ON BY MEN.

III. IT CAUSES THE SEED TO BE SNATCHED AWAY BY THE DEVIL.

"Now the parable is this: the seed is the Word of God. And they by the way-side are they that hear; then the devil cometh and taketh the Word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved."—*St. Luke* viii. 11, 12.

1. *The seed is the Word of God.* The Word of God is here likened to seed; because, as the seed is the origin of the whole plant and of all its fruit, so whatever good is done in the world, even confirmed sanctity, proceeds from the Word; as St. Thomas shows. And, as other plants spring from this seed, and, according

to their Creator's command, continue and multiply, so will the Word of God be continually propagated in the hearts of men in successive generations, even to the consummation of the world. For it is God's will that, from the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, typified by that of Noe, "all the days of the earth, seed time and harvest . . . . shall not cease" (Gen. viii. 22). St. Bonaventure says that by means of this seed we are born again and made holy and divine, for "of his own will hath he begotten us by the word of truth" (St. James i. 18). But dissipation makes the heart like a public highway, and is therefore a hindrance to the development of the seed, removing it even from the memory. He cannot be a good Priest who loves not recollection; solitude, not public life, makes the true cleric, says St. Jerome. If holy Priests have derived so great profit from the Divine Word, it is because they have loved solitude, saying, with St. Gregory Nazianzen, "The Carmel of Elias and the desert of St. John teach me the beauty of solitude and quiet." St. Eucherius says that the desert is not unfruitful, because the seed which is sown there is not easily lost, nor trodden on, nor carried away by birds. St. Prosper also counsels a good Priest to withdraw himself from the noise of worldly business and to love a holy retirement.

2. *They by the way-side.* The highway, which all men tread, is dry and untilled; in like manner (says St. Cyril) a stubborn heart, ever exposed to worldly affairs, cannot be penetrated by Divine admonitions, and remains without fruit. Such are all Ecclesiastics who love the bustle of the world; they cannot (says Origen) become Saints. On this account Almighty God declared that He had separated the Levites from the people and united them to Himself (Numbers xvi. 9). At least an inward solitude is necessary (says St. Augustine), that is, a careful guardianship of our own hearts; and this is produced only by habitual recollection. We must find leisure to withdraw ourselves at times even from the active duties of our ministry, following the example of Christ, Who "retired into the desert and prayed" (St. Luke v. 16). For He thus showed us (says St. Gregory Nazianzen) that we must allow ourselves some rest, in order to recall our minds from the anxieties and distractions with which we are surrounded.

3. *Then the devil cometh and taketh the Word.* The devil is far more eager to effect our ruin than we are to work out our salvation, and he rejoices to see us in this state of dissipation, because then (says St. Thomas) he can take away the Divine seed out of our heart and tread it down. Hence the Wise Man enjoins us "with all watchfulness" to "keep our heart," in order that the evil one may not take away the precious seed from which we derive eternal life (Wisdom iv. 23). In reading the lives of zealous Priests and watchful Pastors, like St. Paulinus, St. Zenobius, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, &c., we find that, by retiring from time to time into solitude, they rendered the assaults of the devil powerless; for they came forth with their strength renewed against him. St. Basil calls solitude a terrible dwelling-place for the evil spirit. Let us, then, so apportion our time as to profit by these great truths, and let us flee from excitement and worldly dissipation, which are the very bane of Priests.

"I am become like to a pelican of the wilderness, I am like a night-raven in the house."—*Ps.* ci. 7.

"He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace, because he hath taken it up upon himself."—*Lam.* iii. 28.

THURSDAY.

SOME PRIESTS PASS FROM FERVOUR TO THE LOSS OF GRACE.

I. THEY WERE FERVENT FOR A TIME.
II. THEIR FERVOUR WANTED ROOT.
III. THEY YIELDED TO TEMPTATION.

"Now they upon the rock are they, who, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no roots, for they believe for awhile, and in time of temptation they fall away."—*St. Luke* viii. 13.

1. *Receive the word with joy.* There are some unhappy Priests who, like Judas, though they began well, have come to a miserable end. At the beginning they understood that a true Priest requires something more than the mere Sacrament of Order, and that he must also, as St. Augustine says, put on the robe of sacerdotal justice. They said with their whole heart, "the Lord is the portion of my inheritance;" and each of them was, as he had promised to be, full of devotion, free from vice, and separated from every stain of sin. Each was (as St. Jerome describes the true cleric) himself the Lord's portion, and took the Lord for his portion; showing himself as one who possesses the Lord and is possessed by the Lord. He was duly promoted to Sacred Orders, after having earned general praise for the piety of his life. Having shown himself faithful and devout in the inferior Orders, he was raised to the Priesthood. He celebrated his first Mass, and many other Masses, with fervour; he was full of all modesty, so as to move those who heard his Mass to devotion. But afterwards "the gold" of charity became "dim," and "the finest

colour" of modesty "changed" (Lam. iv. 1). Such an one should weep over the memory of his youthful fervour, and well does it become him to repeat those words of Job: "Who will grant me, that I might be according to the months past, ... as I was in the days of my youth, when God was secretly in my tabernacle?" (Job xxix. 2—4).

2. *And these have no roots.* Such Priests lost fervour, and lost even grace, because the spiritual plant had no roots. And what are these roots? Venerable Bede answers: "Love, and perseverance in virtue." They were without love, and they had no perseverance; they were not "rooted and founded in charity" (Eph. iii. 17). Their virtues were "bastard slips," which did "not take deep root" (Wisd. iv. 3), and hence it came to pass that these plants were quickly dried up: "the grass is withered away, the spring is faded, all the greenness is perished" (Isa. xv. 6). The fault is theirs; because, although (as St. Chrysostom observes) in a material sense the rock can never become good soil, yet, in a moral sense, it is possible for the rock to become fruitful earth. Hence it is that our Saviour warns us to fear hardness of heart, and to keep the heart softened by means of meditation and contrition. Therefore let us have a horror of such faults and negligences as lead to hardness of heart; let us seek after a profound love of God; and let us direct all our actions to Him, as to our last end. Let us strive not to resemble some of the younger Priests, who delight in Divine things, but, at the same time, cultivate human affections. Such as these have notmuch earth, and therefore their virtues will be dried up in a short time.

3. *And in time of temptation they fall away.* Such unhappy Priests should have convinced themselves, at the first, of the great truth that all have to carry on a continual "wrestling" against their spiritual enemies (Eph. vi. 12), and that all must "fall into divers temptations" (St. James i. 2). Had they carefully armed themselves against these assaults, had they incessantly implored the Lord's help, the plant of their holiness would not have withered, but would have been like "a tree planted by the waters, which shall not fear when the heat cometh" (Jerem. xvii. 8). *Peter of Blois* says well, that we frequently find men who had set

out on the road of holiness as lambs, in the end become as wolves in the Christian flock; and he adds, that it is precisely of such as these that the saying is true: "Before the harvest it was all flourishing, and it shall bud without perfect ripeness" (Isa. xviii. 5). Adversity came to tempt them, and they gave way. Give me, O my God, a heart of flesh, a teachable heart; water the earth of my soul with Thy grace; and grant that Thy divine Word may produce in me fruit which shall persevere unto life eternal!

"When my strength shall fail, do not Thou forsake me."—*Ps.* lxx. 9.

"Grant, O Lord, that my fruit may not fail, but that every month I may bring forth first-fruits, and that my waters may issue out of the sanctuary."—*Ezechiel* xlvii. 12.

FRIDAY.

HOW PRIESTS DESTROY THEIR USEFULNESS.

I. THE THORNS TO WHICH THEY ARE LIABLE.
II. THEY ARE CHOKED UP BY THESE THORNS.
III. THEY YIELD NO FRUIT.

"And that which fell among thorns, are they who have heard, and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit."—*St. Luke* viii. 14.

1. *And that which fell among thorns.* If our Lord Jesus Christ had not told us so, who could have believed that worldly business, riches, and pleasure are thorns? Yet such indeed they are. For they pierce and lacerate the mind by the thoughts which they suggest; and, when they draw the soul into sin, they produce as it were bleeding wounds; as St. Gregory says. And, if they are thorns for all men, much more are they for Ecclesiastics, to whom

these things are especially hurtful. Let such remember the counsel of the Angelical Doctor, urging them to avoid all occasions of distraction, and especially secular business. Again, in regard to riches, nothing is so frequently impressed on Priests as detachment from them; for (says St. John Damascene) they who are troubled with the charge of administering riches cannot fully and purely run in the way of virtue. And St. Peter Damain says that true riches decrease in proportion to the increase of miserable worldly gains. Lastly, as regards pleasures, let us remember how often mortification is recommended to us, and that it is only those who make a continual sacrifice of their life to God who can be said to follow the straight line of a truly sacerdotal life. Therefore let us store up in our hearts that great maxim of St. Isidore, that the true Priest must crucify himself to the world by means of mortification of the flesh.

2. *Are choked.* This is the word which Divine Wisdom has chosen as most proper to express the injury which worldly business, riches, and pleasures bring on Priests. They are choked by them; for a plant which is crushed and is not free to unfold itself is choked. To choke a plant signifies to bend it down, to hinder it from looking up to heaven. The crook-backed was not allowed, under the old Law, to minister at the Altar; and we know (says St. Gregory) that he is crook-backed before Christ who is weighed down by earthly solicitude, so that he cannot look up to those things which are above. To be choked signifies also to be deprived of the power of breathing, and this is precisely what is lost amidst worldly business; for (says St. Jerome) the soul which is immersed in secular affairs is fettered and has no freedom to think of God. Again, to be choked signifies to have the throat so compressed as to be unable to speak clearly; and this is the case with Ecclesiastics when worldly cares deprive them of the time, the opportunity, and the will, to learn and to preach the truths of Religion. Lastly, to be choked signifies to be unable to breathe the air of life; and importunate thoughts (says St. Gregory) so strangle the Priest that they close his heart against the entrance of heavenly desires, and leave no egress for prayer. *Is not a Priest* useless in such a state as this? and should we not

fear lest we reduce ourselves to this condition? What measures must we take to guard against it?

3. *And yield no fruit.* These words justify our Saviour's command to His Apostles: "Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses" (St. Matt. x. 9), "neither have two coats" (St. Luke ix. 3). For, by thus removing from them all kinds of thorns, He rendered them capable of yielding that abundance of fruit for which He looked when He sent them into the world and dispersed them abroad: "I have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit" (St. John xv. 16). And St. Bernard tells Priests that, if they would not lose much time, wear themselves out with vain labour, afflict their spirit, weaken their mind, and diminish grace, they should detach themselves from perishing goods, from luxury of the senses, from worldly business; as such things produce nothing but spiders' webs. All the time which is spent in such occupations as these is at the expense of our souls, and is a loss to the work of our Ministry; and therefore it yields no fruit. Let us persuade ourselves, in short, that these things are thorns, that Jesus Christ looks on them as thorns, that the Saints have so regarded them, and that we ourselves shall so regard them at the hour of death. We cannot touch a thorn without being pricked by it; so likewise (says St. Chrysostom) we cannot entangle ourselves in worldly matters without injury to our souls. Let us pray to God in holy Mass to give us grace to understand this, so that we may in the end yield Him much fruit.

"Thou shalt bless the crown of the year of thy goodness, and thy fields shall be filled with plenty."—*Ps.* lxiv. 13.

"Break up anew my fallow ground, and let me not sow upon thorns."—*Jeremias* iv. 3.

SATURDAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN THE PATTERN OF GOOD GROUND.

I. MARY IS THE GOOD GROUND.
II. SHE RECEIVED THE DIVINE SEED.
III. SHE BROUGHT FORTH FRUIT.

"But that on the good ground, are they who, in a good and very good heart, hearing the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience."—*St. Luke* viii. 15.

1. *But that on the good ground.* Mary is called in figure, by St. Bonaventure, "good ground," and by Albertus Magnus, "the best ground, not bringing forth thorns and thistles, but most easy of cultivation, and most fertile." This ground was never struck by the curse of Almighty God, but was blessed; and on it, as St. Anselm says, is sung the Canticle which cannot be sung in a strange land. From this virgin soil was formed the second Adam. As God had at first formed man from the earth, so now from this virgin earth He Himself was made Man; according to the words of St. Irenæus. And St. Athanasius says that, like as Aaron took the long linen garment of the Priesthood from the ground, so from this ground did the Word take flesh, in order to become "the High Priest of the good things to come" (Hebrews ix. 11). From this soil grew that Tree of life which is the source of our salvation (says St. Ambrose, in his commentary on Psalm i.). Therefore let us go to this earth, let us cultivate it with our devotion, and we shall gather an hundredfold; for (says St. Bernard) *he who sows* in this ground receives an hundredfold; that is (as he

explains it), he who honours this great Queen by prayers or worship, shall receive immense benefits even in this present life. Some will, by Her means, be converted and reconciled to Her Son; some will receive the gift of continence; some will grow in humility; some will exercise works of mercy; some will be distinguished for meekness; some will acquire wisdom: for this land produces virtues in which all may clothe themselves.

2. *In a good and very good heart, hearing the Word, keep it.* A good heart is one that hears the Divine Word, a very good heart is one that loves it and directs all its affections by it. Now the Blessed Virgin knew the truth better than any other creature whatsoever; because, from the first moment of Her conception, She was enriched with Wisdom and Knowledge, and Hers was that Wisdom which the Word, the Wisdom of the Father, preferred (says Ernest of Prague) before all beauty. In Her heart was such uprightness (says St. John Damascene) that She became the Holy of Holies, and brought forth the Holy of Holies, the Author of all Sanctity. All this glory came to Her through the Divine Seed, which She received and kept; and for this precious treasure our Saviour declared Her to be more worthy of praise than even on account of Her Divine Maternity (St. Luke xi. 28). St. Bonaventure remarks, in commenting on this passage, that She was not so blessed for bearing Christ in the flesh as for bearing Him perfectly in Her heart. Let us then pray to Her to obtain for us a right understanding and a retentive memory, and grace to meditate diligently on the Divine Word; so that we may become *good* ground, and not like that by the way-side, nor yet as stony, nor as thorny, ground. Let us pray to Her to procure for us a *good heart*, in which alone the heavenly seed can bear its fruit. (So St. Thomas.)

3. *And bring forth fruit in patience.* Mary was the Land which truly gave its fruit, says St. Isidore; Her fruit was sublime, says St. Gregory; it satisfied the whole famishing earth, says St. Proclus; She was rich with the bread of Heaven, says St. Gregory of Nyssa; She was the Land flowing with milk and honey, says St. Peter Damian. Let us, then, who are Priests, go to this Land with greater ardour than the Jews went to the

Promised Land; let us imitate Josue and Caleb, who encouraged the children of Israel to enter therein. Thus shall we find in Her a source of immense happiness to ourselves and to others. For She invites us to taste of Her fruits and to give them to others also. "Come over to me," says She to us, "all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits . . . unto everlasting generations" (Eccles. xxiv. 26—28).

"The earth shall be filled with the fruit of Thy works."—*Ps.* ciii. 13.

"Thy flowers are the fruit of honour and riches . . . in Thee is all grace of the way and of the truth."—*Eccles.* xxiv. 23—25.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE CLERGY OUGHT TO MEDITATE ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I. More than the Laity.
II. Before the Laity.
III. Better than the Laity.

"Then Jesus took unto Him the twelve, and said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished, which were written by the prophets, concerning the Son of Man."—*St. Luke* xviii. 32.

1. *Jesus took unto Him the twelve.* The Saviour's prophecy was the prophecy of a prophecy, because in foretelling His approaching Passion He pointed out what He would do in His Church even to the end of the world; that is, that to Priests more than to the Laity He would make known His Passion, and that they should more carefully meditate upon it. Let us carefully consider the Evangelist's expression "took unto him;" that is, He took *the Apostles* apart, and raised them to the knowledge of a most

sublime mystery; showing us, that this, being a most precious treasure, ought to be committed to the best vessels. The Apostles and other Priests ought to know this mystery better than the Laity; for there is nothing for which we ought to be more grateful to Jesus than for His death. Again, He took "the twelve," bestowing this confidence on the Apostles only, to the exclusion of the other disciples; although Judas was in the number of the twelve: and this, in order to show us that, however unworthy a Priest may be, still the secrets of the Passion are confided especially to him. St. Matthew adds the word "apart," because we ought to meditate upon the Passion in solitude, in order to impress it thoroughly upon our own heart, and to be able worthily to celebrate holy Mass, which is a continuation of the sacrifice of the Cross. So (as the Roman Pontifical enjoins) shall we better imitate the Divine Mysteries which we handle; so will our life become more perfect; and so, by this constant meditation on Christ's Passion, will the Priest be "made conformable to His death" (Phil. iii. 10). So, more carefully and with greater success shall we dispense the heavenly treasures of the Blood of Christ and the fruits of His Passion; and so shall we be better able to preach "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2).

2. *Behold we go up to Jerusalem.* Our Saviour had already on several occasions publicly foretold His death; but, as St. Chrysostom points out, it was after a hidden manner: it was only to His twelve disciples that He manifested it openly. He forewarned them, in order (as St. Jerome says) that they might not be scandalised by the persecution and ignominy of the Cross. Thus (says St. Cyril) He assured them that He foreknew all, and that He went to death because it was His own will. He forewarns us, who are Priests, of His Passion, by making us celebrate the solemn commemoration of it during these days of Carnival, so that we may be the first to meditate upon it, and afterwards may go up to Jerusalem (that is, into the Church) in order to preach it to others. Let us then bear Jesus in our heart, in our mouth, in our actions; and let us use all our efforts that His Passion may not be continually renewed at this time by the multitude of sins. Let

Priests consider, with St. Paul, that Jesus Christ died for each one of them: "who loved me, and delivered himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). Let them consider that He died expressly to found our Priesthood,—to form a body of Ecclesiastics fit to represent the Church, which at His death He formed for Himself, "not having spot . . . without blemish" (Eph. v. 27)—and to make us "fit ministers of the new Testament" (2 Cor. iii. 6). In fact, one of the most sublime ends which He had before His eyes on the Cross (says St. Leo) was the institution, the splendour, the dignity of the Sacerdotal Order.

3. *And all things shall be accomplished, which were written by the prophets.* All the prophets foretold the death of the Redeemer and the remission of sins which was its fruit: "to Him all the Prophets give testimony, that by His name all receive remission of sins who believe in Him" (Acts x. 43). Yea, all Holy Scripture—"all the Prophets, beginning at Moses," as He Himself explained to His disciples—(St. Luke xxiv. 27), spoke of the sufferings of the Messias. All the mysteries of former ages (says St. Leo) had reference to this Mystery. What page of the Bible (says St. Peter Damian) is not redolent of the mystery of the Cross? Priests, therefore, who have Holy Scripture continually in their hands, should, by comparing the Evangelists with the Prophets, nourish their soul with these sublime and consoling doctrines. They should also read the comments of the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, which render the Passion more instructive and salutary for us. They should meditate upon it constantly, and so impress it on their heart. The Priest who attentively and devoutly exercises himself in this meditation (says St. Bonaventure) will find therein abundance of useful and necessary doctrine, and will have no need to seek it elsewhere, nor to look for aught beyond Jesus.

"O Lord, my helper, and my redeemer."—*Ps.* xviii. 15.

"Think diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself."—*Heb.* xii. 3.

MONDAY.

JESUS CHRIST TEACHES US TO PREACH HIS PASSION.

I. To preach it often.
II. To preach it clearly.
III. To preach it with profit to our hearers.

"For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again."—*St. Luke* xviii. 32, 33.

1. *He shall be delivered to the Gentiles.* St. Jerome says that our Saviour frequently spoke of His Passion, both before and after it had come to pass, and so taught us by His example that we should often speak of it to Christians. St. Bonaventure says that in the Passion of Jesus Christ is found the fulness of that Christian science which we are bound to explain to our people. By preaching to the faithful Jesus crucified we lead them to the most sublime of all philosophy, says St. Bernard. Here, as St. Lawrence Justinian remarks, the unlettered man finds a book from which he draws both joy and compunction, whilst the learned derive from it new rays of light and are enkindled with more ardent charity. When we have succeeded in disposing our listeners to meditate on this great mystery, we have advanced them on the road to perfection. On this account the Supreme Pontiff, Benedict XIV. (in the Brief "*Quum tanta*" of the 30th August, 1741), when declaring the advantages of the "Via Crucis," particularly sets forth that of accustoming the Faithful to meditate on the Cross; in which (says St. Thomas) is found the pattern of

every virtue. Priests can propose no more useful subject of meditation to the unlearned than this; says St. Lawrence Justinian. Let us then resolve to make this the subject of our discourse, convinced that, if our sacred teaching is centred upon it, a vast field of instruction and compunction will be opened for our hearers.

2. *And shall be mocked and scourged.* Jesus Christ, Whom Moses called a Prophet (Deut. xviii. 15), foretold His Passion, not with the obscurity in which prophecies are usually shrouded, but with singular clearness. He foretold its near approach by the word "Behold!": by the words "shall be delivered" He declared that He would be given over to His executioners—by His Father, Who "delivered him up"—by Judas, who was "the traitor,"—and by the Jews, who "delivered him to Pilate and to the power of the Romans." Moreover (as St. Cyril observes) He foretold the order of His Passion, saying: "He shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon;" and He mentions particularly the "spitting," because (according to St. Chrysostom) this circumstance was especially foretold by Isaias (l. 6). Lastly, after having by the repetition of the word indicated the cruelty of His scourging, He foretells His death: "and, after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death." In this way did our Lord Jesus Christ teach Priests, that they must endure all kinds of suffering for the truth. He taught them, moreover, to preach the Passion with simplicity and clearness. The mere historical account of it is not sufficient, nor even the commentaries of the Holy Fathers, if we would move our hearers to compunction and make them better men. A florid style of rhetoric does but too frequently cause the fruit of this preaching to be lost.

3. *And the third day He shall rise again.* This is the reward, or at least one of the rewards, which our Saviour received from His Father, because He humbled Himself to death, even the death of the Cross. This, too, is the honey which sweetens the bitterness of all our sufferings,—this resurrection to eternal life, for which we look; says St. Augustine. So would He have those first Priests of His Church, and afterwards their successors, animate *their courage* with the hope of the resurrection, when they behold

troubles around them; as St. Chrysostom points out. In preaching the Passion, He would that Priests should make Christians understand that He "was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). He would have us kindle in the hearts of the Faithful the holy love of Him, Who by His death has made us "rich in all things" (1 Cor. i. 5). The profit of fervent preaching of the Passion is immense; for it animates the hearers to suffer for the love of Jesus, to be diligent in keeping His grace and in avoiding all that may offend Him. If (says St. Isidore) we call to mind the Passion of our Redeemer, nothing is too hard for us to bear. Let us then preach it often, let us preach it well, and let us beg of our Lord Jesus Christ the grace to preach it profitably.

"I shall not die but live, and shall declare the works of the Lord."—*Ps.* cxvii. 17.

"We will hear the word out of thy mouth, and will tell it them from thee."—*Ezechiel* iii. 17.

TUESDAY.

HOW MEN FAIL, IN UNDERSTANDING THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. The Apostles did not understand it.
II. Some Priests do not understand it.
III. How it is to be understood.

"And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said."—*St. Luke* xviii. 34.

1. *And they understood none of these things.* Although our Saviour had foretold His Passion in the clearest and most precise terms, the Apostles understood nothing of it. Our Lord was

pleased not to explain to them at this moment that great event, which they would soon behold with their own eyes, but which would be manifest to their understanding only after the Resurrection and, still more clearly, after they had been enlightened by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. It was also the design of Almighty God (as St. Bonaventure points out) that at this moment the Apostles should be a figure of the Jews, from whom the Divine secrets are hidden, until Almighty God shall take away the veil from their hearts—the veil which at that time was not rent, but which after the Passion was rent in two. Elsewhere we find the Apostles possessed with the common prejudice that the Messias' Kingdom was to be a temporal kingdom, and that it would shortly have its beginning. Moreover, as Venerable Bede says, they loved our Saviour's life; they not only acknowledged Him to be an innocent man, but they believed Him to be true God, and, as such, incapable of death. And it is worthy of note that—no sooner had the Jews heard our Lord mention His death by the words, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (St. John xii. 32)—than they understood Him; and no sooner was His Resurrection mentioned than they remembered His words (St. Matt. xxviii. 63). His disciples, on the contrary, heard Him speak of it clearly and frequently, but they did not understand Him: for we do not readily believe that which is displeasing to us, and we are inclined to give an allegorical and mystical interpretation to words when their literal meaning runs counter to our wishes. Let us examine ourselves on this point: let us see how often we have misunderstood God's voice, speaking to us inwardly, because it was opposed to our self-love.

2. *And this word was hid from them.* This want of understanding in the Apostles was a mystery. In this, says St. Bonaventure, they were a figure of Priests, who do not penetrate the mystery of the Cross, do not meditate upon it, and do not see it in its true light. They read the Passion in the figures and prophecies of the Old Testament, they read it in the Gospels, they speak of it to the Faithful, they have the crucifix continually before *their eyes,* they celebrate daily the Sacrifice which is the continua-

tion of the Passion, and which continually renews the memory of it—but all this makes no impression on their mind; it seems as if they understood nothing of it, as if the mystery of the Cross was, for them, a hidden mystery, as if "the shepherds themselves knew no understanding" (Isa. lvi. 11). Far less do they understand it in practice; for they will suffer nothing for Jesus, they fly from everything which entails effort; in adversities, in sickness, in distress, they abandon themselves to impatience and anger; they shrink from mortification, because they will not crucify the flesh with its vices and passions. Yet, in the following words, St. Peter clearly points out to us the mystery of the Cross: "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps" (1 Pet. ii. 21). And, as the Apostles, when they had heard this prophecy, instead of thinking of their Lord's sufferings, began to dispute about the chief places in the Messias' kingdom (St. Matt. xx. 20)—so are there some Priests so preoccupied with thoughts of worldly grandeur as to be indisposed to understand this mystery. Whence, O my God, comes the wisdom to understand it? Where is the place of understanding? The carnal man "knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of them that live in delights" (Job xxviii. 12, 13). O Jesus, Fountain of Wisdom, Light of the world, make me understand this truth of Thy Passion, and grant me grace to live as a Priest who tastes it and profits by it!

3. *And they understood not the things that were said.* If we would understand the Passion, we must love it; for, in that case, Almighty God will be pleased to illuminate our blindness, so that we may truly comprehend it. As St. Bonaventure says, the Apostles understood not these truths because they did not love them; and in this appears the blindness of the human heart, which cannot understand the mysteries of Redemption unless God sends it light. Again, we must study the Passion; because (says St. Augustine) in Christ crucified man has much to learn. Lastly, we must meditate upon it assiduously, bearing it (says St. Bernard in the Canticles) perpetually in our mind, so that it may be to us "a bundle of myrrh abiding ever between our breasts." And the "Spirit of grace and of prayer," which is "a light denied to the

bodily senses," must enable us to meditate on the Crucified with such power as shall overcome the powers of sense and the empire of the passions. How great disgrace is it for a Priest to behold the Faithful making this mystery the delight of their heart, mingling their tears with the Blood of the Redeemer,—nay, to see that a single word on this subject moves them, that the smallest object which recalls the Passion of their Lord to their mind affects them, penetrates them, excites their love,—whilst he, continually occupied with that great mystery, yet remains insensible! Truly such Priests as "have not known nor understood this, walk on in darkness" (Ps. lxxxi. 5). Deliver me from this ignominy, from this ruin, O my God!

"O my God, enlighten my darkness."—*Ps.* xvii. 29.

"May the inspiration of the Almighty give me understanding."—*Job* xxxii. 8.

ASH WEDNESDAY.

THE BLINDNESS OF SINFUL PRIESTS.

I. BLINDNESS MAY BE A SIN IN ITSELF.

II. BLINDNESS MAY BE THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

III. THE REMEDY FOR THIS BLINDNESS IN EITHER CASE.

"Now it came to pass, when He drew nigh to Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the way-side, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by: and he cried out saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." —*St. Luke* xviii. 35—38.

1. *When he drew nigh to Jericho, a certain blind man.* If this blind man was sitting near Jericho, and if Jericho is the figure of temporal goods, we can easily understand that this unhappy man *was a type* of those who, through attachment to worldly goods,

have lost spiritual light, that is to say, the light of grace. Is it credible that a man of God—a Priest—could suffer so great a loss? Yet it sometimes happens that such a man allows himself to be blinded by vile pleasures, as the good Tobias was blinded by the sparrow's dung. In this case the blindness is in itself a sin: it is a wilful closing of the eyes to the light of truth. Those who are guilty of it fall into the condemnation pronounced by the Psalmist: "they will not understand that they might do well" (Ps. xxxv. 4). Or, it may be they are so engrossed with worldly business and inflamed with the love of sensible things, that they neglect the knowledge of the Law, and abandon the pursuit of study, which is the Priest's special heritage; and thus they are culpably ignorant of things which they ought to know: "fire hath fallen on them, and they shall not see the sun" (Ps. lvii. 9). In either case, blindness is sin, especially for one who is called to be "the light of the world," and who could easily overcome such ignorance. Yet how many Prelates, how many Priests, are content to live with a culpably erroneous conscience! "Who is blind, but my servant? . . . Who is blind, but the servant of the Lord?" (Isa. xlii. 19). "They are walking in a false path, which they think to be the right way, but which, in the end, will lead them to eternal death" (Prov. xiv. 12; xvi. 25). Through the propensity of their will to earthly goods, to worldly pleasures and honours, they are easily persuaded (says St. Augustine) that evil is good, or at least that it approaches good.

2. *A certain blind man sat by the way-side, begging.* This man, in whom two great evils—blindness and poverty—were joined together, is a lively image of that Priest to whom God has said: "Thou knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked" (Apoc. iii. 17). Such a Priest is one who thought himself rich in spiritual goods, able to see, and "having need of nothing" (Apoc. iii. 17); but he was poor, because he had not the riches of virtue; he was blind, because he saw not his own poverty (as St. Gregory says). Such blindness is the just punishment of sins committed by Priests, who once were full of light but have chosen to be "rebellious to the light" (Job xxiv. 13). Yet few, says St. Augustine, see these punishments of sin,

few lament them; and therefore the Spirit of God specially commends this subject to our notice. Is darkening of heart, blindness of mind, a slight punishment? And yet (says St. Gregory) this is the ordinary punishment of Ecclesiastics who fall into the sin of luxury; they continue to be leaders of the people, sentinels of the house of God, while at the same time they are "blind and leaders of the blind" (St. Matt. xv. 14); they "grope as if they had no eyes" (Isaias lvi. 10).

3. *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.* Who taught thee, O happy blind man, to invoke thy deliverer? Deprived of sight, hast thou been able to read the books in which He is called the light of the world? Truly, He Who will restore sight to thine eyes has already forestalled thee by giving light to thy soul; for (as we read in the Psalms) "He alone is able to enlighten the blind." St. Bonaventure says that this blind man gives us an example of prayer; nay, he is a pattern for the blind who desire to regain the light of God. No other physician than Christ can cure this evil. He, when He withdraws His mercy, "scattereth mists like ashes" (Ps. cxlvii. 16), and especially does He strike those with blindness who presume on their own knowledge; as St. Augustine shows. "He himself has numbered all the steps of these blind men in their dark course, since they left the right way" (Prov. ii. 13). He Himself knows the fatal cause of their blindness (says St. Basil); He foresees its effects. Therefore, if thou findest thyself in this miserable state, have recourse to thy heavenly Physician; for He came down upon earth purposely to give sight to the blind, to "lead the blind into the way which they knew not . . to make darkness light before them" (Isaias xlii. 16). He Himself will receive thy prayer, and will say to thee, as He said to the blind man of Jericho: "Receive thy sight."

"Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death."—*Ps.* xii. 4.

"Strike me not, O Lord, with madness, and blindness, and fury of mind."—*Deut.* xxviii. 28.

THURSDAY.

PRIESTS HAVE TO CURE SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

I. THEY MUST REGARD IT WITH TRUE COMPASSION.
II. THEY MUST REMEMBER THAT THEY ARE DESTINED TO CURE IT.
III. THEY MUST USE EFFICACIOUS REMEDIES.

"And they that went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus standing commanded him to be brought unto Him. And when he was come near, He asked him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said: Lord, that I may see."—*St. Luke* xviii. 39—41.

1. *Rebuked him.* The crowd, who had no pity on the blind man, indicates the multitude of men who do not compassionate spiritual blindness, nay, who do not even understand the existence of so fatal a calamity. If a man be deprived of his bodily eyes (says St. Augustine), all call him miserable; but, if he lose the eyes of his mind, so long as he abounds in temporal goods, all esteem him happy; though they only call him so who have themselves lost the eyes of the soul. A Priest, therefore, who has not closed his eyes to the Divine light, must look upon such a man as most miserable; for (says St. Thomas) blindness of mind is an entire privation of the knowledge of spiritual good, and is directly opposed to the gift of understanding. Let such a man clothe himself with the bowels of Jesus Christ, and then surely he will mourn over the miserable condition of these blind men: "Jesus was grieved for the blindness of their hearts" (St. Mark iii. 5). He will consider how frequently they stumble and fall headlong, whilst they tread the slippery way of their perverse

inclinations without light, and how the devil, profiting by these circumstances, pursues them and thrusts them into the abyss. "Let their way become dark and slippery, and let the angel of the Lord pursue them" (Ps. xxxiv. 6). He will consider how soon death will open their eyes, and that then, bitterly weeping, they will say: "We have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us" (Wisdom v. 6). Who will give us fountains of tears to weep for such great misery? Can that Priest love his neighbour, can he be zealous for the salvation of souls, who is not grieved at such a spectacle so frequently brought before his eyes?

2. *He commanded him to be brought unto Him.* Priests, by the word of doctrine, have that light which enlightens the ignorant and the blind. Hence our Saviour said to the first Priests: "You are the light of the world" (St. Matt. v. 14); and, wherever they go (says St. Hilary) they ought to carry light amidst the darkness. Indeed, Almighty God promised that, by means of the Apostles, He would open the eyes of the blind: "The eyes of the blind shall see" (Isa. xxix. 18). "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened" (Isa. xxxv. 5). And, if these first preachers of the Gospel really enlightened those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, it must needs be that they who participate in their Priesthood should participate also in their anxiety to cure the blindness of such as live in sin and are without Christian virtue: "for he that hath not these things with him is blind and groping" (2 Pet. i. 9).

3. *What wilt thou that I do to thee?* Christ could speak thus to the blind man, because He was "the Light of the world," and the Father had sent Him "to open the eyes of the blind" (Isaias xlii. 7). After healing this man, and many others who were blind, He could with good reason say to the disciples of the Precursor, that, by His divine operation, "the blind see, the lame walk" (St. Luke vii. 22). But the most wonderful of all His prodigies was His promise that His followers should do still greater things than He Himself had done: "he that believeth in Me, the works that I do he also shall do, and greater than those shall he do" (St. John xiv. 12). Hence it is that zealous Priests daily

cure many who are spiritually blind, and whose case had seemed desperate; nor is it without mystical meaning that Jesus Christ commanded "the feeble, the blind, and the lame" to be brought in to the heavenly banquet (St. Luke xiv. 21). When they are introduced into this banquet, the first requisite is the application of the gall of penance to their eyes, with earnest prayer to the Father and giver of light to show them the light of truth. Prayers, therefore, with preaching, and the administration of the Sacraments, are the most powerful remedies which Priests must apply to the cure of this blindness. Are we doing this, or are we keeping our talent idle? May it not be that we ourselves are, by reason of such neglect, to be numbered among the blind?

"O my God, enlighten my darkness."—*Ps.* xvii. 29.

"I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame, I was the father of the poor."—*Job* xxix. 15.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY.

THE CROWN OF THORNS AN EMBLEM OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

I. IT REPRESENTS THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PRIESTHOOD.
II. IT EXPRESSES THE DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD.
III. IT SIGNIFIES THE REWARD OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

"The soldiers platting a crown of thorns, put it upon His head, and they put on Him a purple garment. And they came to Him, and said: Hail, King of the Jews."—*St. John* xix. 2, 3.

1. *Platting a crown of thorns.* Priests wear the tonsure on their head as an emblem of this Crown of Jesus; for, says St. Germanus, it takes the place of the Crown of thorns worn by

our Great High Priest. Hence Priests have constant occasion to meditate on the torment suffered by the Author of their Priesthood. It was a horrible torment; for the thorns penetrated into His tender head; the head being the most sensitive part of the human body, the point in which all its sensations are concentrated. How bitter, says St. Bernard, was the torment His Sacred Head endured from that Crown of thorns, which caused His Blood to flow from innumerable wounds! If one single thorn fixed in any part of the body causes intolerable pain, if we pity even animals pierced by them, how can we keep from weeping, when we behold a Crown of thorns on our Saviour's Head, lacerating it (as St. Anselm says) with a thousand punctures. Let us consider that in these thorns He felt our sins piercing Him, which (says St. Chrysostom) afflicted Him far more than the thorns themselves. These thorns (says St. Ambrose) represented other and more fatal thorns, which choke His word, and render His Blood of no effect for many souls. Moreover, in these thorns He beheld the effect of the original curse upon the earth. Thus, the thorns, which the first Adam beheld springing up at his feet, the second Adam bore on His head, even to his sepulchre; so that even in this sense it is true, that "His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree" (1 Peter i. 24). For He hung naked upon the Cross, wearing nothing but His Crown of thorns, and He wore this as an emblem of sins; says St. Athanasius. Shall not we, then, who are members of this Head, nay, who are ourselves Heads of the people in His place—shall not we be willing to bear the thorns of mental sufferings and the thistles of bodily pain? And shall we venture to complain, if our people are often ungrateful and render us thorns instead of good grain? Rather, let us say with our Divine Saviour: "Let thistles grow up to me instead of wheat, and thorns instead of barley" (Job xxxi. 40). Let us adore the hand of the Eternal Father, when it is heavy upon us and afflicts us by human agency: "Thy hand was heavy upon me, I am turned in my anguish, whilst the thorn is fastened" (Ps. xxxi. 4).

2. *And they came to Him.* The soldiers came to Him; they

bent the knee before Him in derision; they tore the reed from His hands; they struck Him on the head; they spat in His face: and our Saviour suffered all these outrages as a mock king. Thus it is difficult to say which was the most cruel element in this crowning, the pain or the insult. Let us consider that, at the price of all this ignominy, He purchased for us the Sacerdotal dignity, which (says St. Isidore) is the extreme limit of all that man can desire. If thou receivest honour from the people, if the tonsure which thou bearest on thy head is venerated as a "royal ornament," if, in these days, "he who honours Christ's Priest, honours Christ" (as St. Chrysostom declares),—all this thou owest to Christ's ignominy. And, if sometimes thou art humiliated and afflicted for fulfilling thy Priestly duties, take comfort in the thought that thou art a partaker in the humiliations and sufferings of thy God, and, with Jesus, say to thy Heavenly Father: "For thy sake I have borne reproach" (Ps. lxviii. 8). It is not fitting (says St. Bernard) that thou shouldst be a delicate member under a thorn-crowned Head.

3. *Hail, King of the Jews.* It was the will of the Eternal Father to invest His Son with a kingdom; but His kingdom was not to be of this world. The Jews were mistaken, the Apostles themselves were mistaken, when they looked for temporal sovereignty in the Messias. His Mother, the Synagogue, was to crown Him in the day of His Espousals with the Church (Cant. iii. 11), and this crowning took place, as had been foretold, in the royal Sion (Ps. ii. 6); so that, whilst the soldiers saluted Him as king, they, like Caiaphas, prophesied without knowing it; as St. Bernard points out. This was a new and incredible prodigy (says St. Athanasius), a glorious emblem of victory. Then did the Gentiles salute Him as King of the Jews. The Magi had thus reverenced Him; and such was the title which Pilate wrote upon His Cross; yet, says St. Augustine, the Jews would never give Him this name. Then was He crowned King of Martyrs; and therefore the insignia of sovereignty, namely, the Crown, the reed-sceptre, the purple garment, were never given to any of the Martyrs, who yet participated in the other torments of their Lord. Thus did He merit, says St.

Isidore, to be acknowledged King of kings, and to crown all His elect in heaven. We, too, who are associated with Him in His Priesthood, by virtue of His Crown may look for that which St. Peter promised to Priests above all others, namely, "a never-fading crown of glory" (1 Pet. v. 4). We expect, moreover, to see the souls saved by our ministry become our "joy and crown" (Phil. iv. 1). Let not then Thy Crown of thorns, O Jesus, be of none effect for me!

"They surrounded me like bees, and they burned like fire among thorns." —*Ps.* cxvii. 12.

"O Lord, by Thy crown of thorns I will receive a kingdom of glory, and a crown of beauty at Thy hand."—From *Wisdom* v. 17.

SATURDAY.

MARY, THE PRESERVATIVE AGAINST BLINDNESS, AND THE REMEDY FOR BLINDNESS.

I. MARY DESIRES THAT PRIESTS BE ENLIGHTENED.
II. SHE HAS COMPASSION ON THOSE WHO ARE BLIND.
III. PRIESTS MUST PROPAGATE DEVOTION TO HER, AS A PRESERVATIVE AND REMEDY AGAINST BLINDNESS.

"But he said: Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God."—*St. Luke* xviii. 41—43.

1. *Lord, that I may see.* The blind man asked neither for gold nor temporal goods, but only for light. Let us imitate him, following the example of Solomon, who sought light and wisdom, not riches nor length of days. He was heard, because he *directed his* prayers to the true Light, which enlighteneth every

man that cometh into this world (St. John i. 9). Now, St. Bernard says that, after Her Divine Son, Mary is also the true light of every man; She is the light of our heart, says St. John Damascene; She is the enlightener of the whole world, says St. Thomas; and therefore, in Holy Scripture, She is compared to the sun and to the moon. St. Andrew of Crete says that She communicates Her splendour to Religious after a special manner, and She takes particular care to enlighten Priests, who are destined to shed light upon others. Hence St. Bonaventure calls Her the Mistress of Masters. She, having most close relations with our Priesthood, desires to see Priests, as Her Son constituted them, "the light of the world," and She ever uses Her powerful intercession towards this end.

2. *Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole.* The blind man had confidence in the Physician, and received his cure. They who have confidence in Mary, even though they may have incurred spiritual blindness, will soon recover sight: for, says St. Bernard, she is "the light of the blind." As Her Son gave sight to him who was born blind by spittle (and that spittle signifies, mystically, Divine Wisdom), so does She, by Her Son, enlighten the most desperate of the blind. She, who brought forth the Light of souls, has compassion on those who are in darkness, and therefore She will drive away the dark clouds of passion and sin from our souls. St. Ephrem says that Almighty God would have Her to be the glory of His Priests; St. John Damascene says that by Her means Almighty God would have the kingdom of the Priesthood to be rich in light. Therefore it is displeasing to Her to see Priests groping in darkness in the noonday; but, if they have recourse to Her, they will find Her an Advocate, a Refuge, a true Enlightener; yea, says Albertus Magnus, the Enlightener of "them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, directing our feet into the way of peace" (St. Luke i. 79).

3. *And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.* All Christians, when they see clearly, and when their eyes are not closed by sin, give glory to God. Hence, if the Priest desires to promote God's glory, and to become the instrument of a work so

befitting his sacred character, he must urge men to glorify the Lord. For this end let him promote devotion to Mary; so will the just be preserved from falling into the darkness of sin. For She is the light of all who confide in Her (says St. Bonaventure) and She (says St. Antoninus) will discover to them the snares of the devil; She will rejoice and strengthen the eyes that are sound. Sinners, on the other hand, will find in Mary a prompt and certain remedy for their blindness; because (says St. Anselm) She is the Divine luminary shining before God, and by her rays dispelling the dark clouds of our sins.

Let us persuade ourselves that She is the fountain of all grace, and of all consolation, as St. Ephrem calls Her; and by Her shall be granted to thee, O Minister of God, "that thy eyes look straight on, and thy eyelids go before thy steps" (Prov. iv. 25).

"Holy Mary, pray for us, that our eyes be not darkened that they see not."—*Ps.* lxviii. 24.

"Break the captive's fetters, light on blindness pour."—*The Church's Hymn.*

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF PRIESTS.

I. AT THE BEGINNING OF THEIR PRIESTHOOD.
II. IN FULFILLING THEIR MINISTRY.
III. AT THE CLOSE OF THEIR CAREER.

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil."—*St. Matt.* iv. 1.

1. *Jesus was led into the desert.* Cornelius à Lapide makes reflection that when the devil foresees the good success of a young man in the Ecclesiastical Ministry, he is accustomed to *assail him* with various temptations; and St. Hilary says that,

e greater the sanctity which the Evil One discerns in a youth
ıo aims at the Priesthood, the more violently does he tempt
m. Jesus Christ, Who retired to the desert in order to be
ıpted, and Who, in overcoming His temptations, gave us a
ttern, and at the same time merited for us strength, to over-
me ours, permits these temptations, in order that we may know
ıw precious is the treasure of Grace and the honour to which
is Grace leads us, since our Enemy is so jealous of our attain-
ş it. So St. Chrysostom. Hence we see doubts, fears, evil
unsels, innumerable obstacles, come upon a youth who is about
determine his vocation; and, above all, he is pertinaciously
ıposed by that wisdom, which St. Bernard calls worldly, earthly,
imal, diabolical—the enemy of salvation, the suffocator of life,
e mother of that tepidity which provokes God to vomit us
t of His mouth. Then we must remember that, if our Mother
e Church desires our labours, we must neither thrust our-
lves forward to offer them out of covetous pride, nor refuse
ım out of deceitful slothfulness, but with meek and humble
art follow the Divine Will. We must place all our confidence
God, because (says St. Leo) He Who confers the dignity will
pply the needful strength.

2. *By the Spirit.* The Holy Spirit, Who came down on our
ırd Jesus Christ on the shores of the Jordan in a visible form,
l Him immediately into the desert to be tempted. In like
ınner does the same Spirit, received at ordination, expose the
iest to temptation when He leads him to the work of the
inistry, says St. Thomas. And, as thieves are not wont to attack
or travellers, but only the rich, so (says St. Gregory) does the
vil employ the most subtle temptations against Priests. He
ıploys the most violent temptations against them (says St.
prian) because he understands very well that Captains and
inces are not taken in a slight battle—the most pertinacious
ıptations, because no bait is more pleasing to his palate than a
est: "his meat is dainty" (Habac. i. 16)—the temptations of
ny evil spirits united together; for he understands well that, if the
ıd be weakened, the body languishes; that, if the Captain fall,
soldiers are put to flight; that, if the Shepherd be stricken, the

flock will be scattered; as St. Lawrence Justinian points out. Let us then learn from our Lord Jesus Christ how we are to resist temptation; let us pray to Him, that He lead us not into temptation, and that He enable us to overcome those which befall us.

3. *To be tempted by the devil.* If man's life be a continual warfare (Job vii. 1), temptations are, without doubt, more terrible at its close. Then will the devil "come down, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time" (Apoc. xii. 12); and, if this be his practice with all the faithful, much more will it be so in the case of Priests, since his reasons for tempting them are so much more powerful. His hatred against Jesus Christ is more fully satisfied if Priests die the death of Ophni and Phinees (1 Kings iv. 10), and if he succeed in plunging them into the terrible fire of hell. The hatred which he bears to Priests, who have stripped him so many times of his prey, stimulates him to drag them down to eternal perdition, where (says St. Chrysostom) the punishment and suffering which awaits them is indeed most fearful. Again, the envy with which he burns against men who have enjoyed so great dignity upon earth, and who look for the consummation of it in heaven, makes him most ardently desire to deprive them of it for ever, so that from the height of glory they may fall headlong into the abyss of ignominy. Do Thou help me, O my God, in that tremendous crisis! Then shall I be assailed by temptations of vanity, pride, impurity, attachment to earth, impatience. Perchance I shall have temptations against Faith, against Hope, against resignation. Forsake me not, for my hope is in Thee.

"In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded."—*Ps.* xxx. 2.

"I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me."—*Phil.* iv. 13.

MONDAY.

EXACT OBSERVANCE OF THE FASTS PRESCRIBED BY HOLY CHURCH BEFITS THE SACERDOTAL STATE.

I. AS A MEANS OF EXPIATING THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE.
II. AS AN EXAMPLE TO THE PEOPLE.
III. AS INCULCATING THE DUTY OF FASTING UPON THEM.

"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry."—*St. Matt.* iv. 2.

1. *And when He had fasted.* If our Saviour had sacred reasons for fasting, and for sanctifying Ecclesiastical Fasts by His fast, one of these reasons most certainly was to invite us to the holy regions of penance; says St. Bonaventure. If it belong to the Priest to reconcile man to his offended God,—as it is said: "in the time of wrath he was made a reconciliation" (Eccles. xliv. 17),—the High Priest of good things to come gave the pattern of this reconciliation to His Ministers. It is written, "Howl, ye ministers of the altars . . . . sanctify ye a fast" (Joel i. 13, 14); it is indeed a charge laid upon Priests to weep for the sins of the people, and that, not with tears alone, says Cornelius à Lapide, but with prayers and penances. It is good to implore the Divine mercy with a body afflicted "in fastings often" (2 Cor. xi. 27), and how dear to God, how beneficial to the people, are the tears of His Priests: "between the porch and the altar the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep, and shall say, Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people" (Joel ii. 17). Indeed, if we read the lives of holy Priests we shall find that they were specially devoted to this practice, so that in them

is the saying of St. Gregory verified, that the lives of the saints interpret the teaching of Holy Scripture. What shall we say, however, if the Priest have need to expiate his own sins? Is not abstinence a most efficacious means of doing penance for past sins? How great a good is fasting, says St. Chrysostom, how powerful a shield against our enemy the devil!

2. *Forty days and forty nights.* St. Gregory tells us that, if our Lord Jesus Christ took no food for forty days, we ought during the forty days of Lent to afflict our bodies as far as is possible. Our Saviour observed the number forty, already signified by the fasts of Moses and Elias, not because He had need of it (says St. Chrysostom), but to give us an example. He gave us the rule; but He gave it first by His example, and afterwards by His words. Therefore let not the Priest follow the lax maxims of the world in regard to Ecclesiastical Fasts; but, before inculcating them upon the people, let him give example of their exact observance, so that of him it may likewise be truly said that "he began to do and to teach" (Acts i. 1). We are the Presbyters (*i.e.*, elders) of the people, and therefore the observance of all rests on our example and our words: "you are the ancients among the people of God, and their very soul resteth upon you" (Judith viii. 21). The Apostle St. Paul used fasts and watching in order to exhibit himself as a minister of God; he shrank not from manifesting himself to the Faithful "in watchings, in fastings" (2 Cor. vi. 5). Woe to those Priests who are severe with others, but tender to themselves, in the matter of fasting.

3. *Afterwards He was hungry.* St. Hilary says that, when our Saviour felt hunger, He abandoned His humanity to the weakness of its nature; therefore let us make Christians understand that the Fasts prescribed by the Church are intended to give some pain to our humanity, otherwise they would be no penance. Let us strenuously oppose the luxurious, impious maxims set forth by ancient and recent heretics against fasting; let us imitate, as far as we can, St. Irenæus, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, those holy apologists of fasting; let us turn over the homilies of St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Leo, St. Cyprian, and, above all, of St. Ambrose; *let us prove*, with St. Thomas, that the natural Divine law implies

fasting; with St. Augustine, that the positive Divine Law commands it. Let us show that the Church has full authority to decree Fasts, and that (as St. Thomas tells us) they who despise the laws of the Church despise the ordinances of God. Let us show that the laws of abstinence were always considered binding and most holy: "most venerable and most holy laws" (2 Mach. vi. 28). Let us do away with the fear that they can injure health; and let us follow the advice of St. Athanasius, and regard as the suggestions of our enemy the words of those who warn us against fasting on any such ground. Let us not believe them, nor pay any attention to them. With the Baptist, let us preach to all "that they bring forth fruits worthy of penance" (St. Luke iii. 8); and let us have this aim in view—that the good works of these days of penance may redeem the sins committed at other seasons.

"I covered my soul in fasting."—*Ps.* lxviii. 11.

"I set my face to the Lord my God, to pray, and make supplication with fasting."—*Dan.* ix. 3.

TUESDAY.

THE TEMPTATION OF GLUTTONY.

I. THE FREQUENCY OF THIS TEMPTATION.
II. WHY THE DEVIL INSISTS ON IT.
III. THE MOTIVES FOR RESISTING IT.

"And the tempter coming, said to Him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."—*St. Matt.* iv. 3, 4.

1. *And the tempter coming.* The first temptation of the second Adam was that of gluttony, says St. Gregory, because the first Adam was also tempted with gluttony. The enemy began with the same temptation with which he had vanquished the human

race—that is to say, gluttony—says St. Ambrose. He usually begins his assaults against us in our early years with this temptation, because he well knows how many faults are committed in youth through gluttony—the ruling passion of that age, as St. Augustine styles it. The same temptation becomes frequent even in spiritual persons; for it has not so hideous an appearance as other sins, and therefore easily gains the consent of good Christians. They often delude themselves in this matter, esteeming that to be a necessity of nature which is mere sensuality; and hence they commit innumerable venial sins, to the great delight of the enemy of their souls. Let us remember that St. Thomas enumerates five different ways in which we can offend against temperance—viz., by haste, by daintiness, by excess, by eagerness, by niceness,—and let us carefully avoid these darts which the Devil hurls against us.

2. *Command that these stones be made bread.* In tempting Priests with gluttony, the devil has first of all the same end in view as in tempting the Faithful generally; and this is, to incline them to be guilty of those slight excesses which St. Augustine calls "minute sins;" for he hopes that they will readily pass from venial sins to those that are mortal, and from mortal sins to eternal damnation. Moreover, with Priests, he has other ends in view worthy of his malice and cunning; he would fain see the offspring of gluttony, so unbecoming the sanctity of the Priesthood, spring up in them; and the five daughters of gluttony, says St. Gregory, are (1) indiscreet merriment, (2) scurrility, (3) obscenity, (4) garrulity, (5) mental obtuseness. His desire is, that the body may be so heavy with food as to render the mind unable to "turn to wisdom" (Eccles. ii. 3); he is anxious, too, that Priests may lose public esteem and their reputation for sanctity, since that so greatly contributes to the success of their ministry; for every one can see clearly that, when men are slaves to their belly, they are incapable of any great achievements. He wishes, moreover, to cause injury to their health by this means, so as to render them unequal to the labours of the Ministry; for "in many meats there will be sickness" (Eccles. xxxvii. 33). He desires *also that the* lives of good Labourers should not be prolonged,

so that he may be quickly relieved of these adversaries; for "by surfeiting many have perished" (Eccles. xxxvii. 34). Therefore let us engrave this maxim of St. Gregory of Nyssa on our heart, that the pleasure of taste is the mother of singular evils. How shameful for a Priest to be the most gluttonous of the family! What a disgrace to a Priest to contract maladies through intemperance! What a reproach to his memory that he had shortened his days through gluttony! Let us pray earnestly to be preserved from this capital sin.

3. *Not in bread alone doth man live.* The kingdom of God, which we ought to preach and spread abroad, is not a kingdom of "meat and drink" (Rom. xiv. 17). In the word of God we have spiritual food provided for us in great abundance; and therefore, when we have given our body what is necessary for life, let us devote all our care to sustaining, increasing, perfecting the life of our soul; the nourishment of which (says St. Gregory of Nyssa) should be chastity, its bread wisdom, its condiment justice, its drink tranquillity, its enjoyment meditation. Let us not think solely, nor chiefly, of bodily food, but let us ever bear the mortification of Jesus in our body, and this (says St. Anselm) will be the best example we can give our people. The more we refrain from those things that are lawful, the more secure shall we be against falling into those things which are unlawful; the more we chastise the body, the easier will it be to preserve chastity; as St. Gregory shows. If the devil tempts us with gluttony, let us call to mind all that we have learned, all that we have preached, against this vice. Let us stimulate ourselves with good doctrine (says St. Gregory); and so shall we imitate our Divine Saviour, Who combated this temptation with a passage of Holy Scripture (Deut. viii. 3). What joy should we have given to our great High Priest, Who began His Ministry with hunger, and ended it with thirst, if we had always done this; and how many victories should we have gained! How much merit have we lost through sensuality!

"But as for me, when they were troublesome to me, I was clothed with hair-cloth, I humbled my soul with fasting."—*Ps.* xxxiv. 13.

"I will always bear in my body Thy mortification, O Jesus."—2 Cor. iv. 10.

WEDNESDAY.

AMBITION, THE PEST OF ECCLESIASTICS.

I. How far it urges them on.
II. To what perils it exposes them.
III. How it is to be repressed.

"Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written: He hath given His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."—*St. Matt.* iv. 5—7.

1. *Upon the pinnacle of the temple.* The devil, discomfited in his first assault, takes a resolution worthy of his rage; he transports Jesus to the Holy City, and places Him on a pinnacle of the Temple. Now, if he treated the Master in this way, the disciples cannot complain if they find themselves tempted like Him; for "the disciple is not above the master" (St. Matt. x. 24). In truth, when the devil stirs up ambitious thoughts in Priests, he takes them up into the Holy City, that is, into the Church, and raises them upon the pinnacles of the Sanctuary; a position full of peril, though so little dreaded. St. Bernard deplores these flights of Lucifer, which are followed by the ambitious desires of those who from the minor orders aspire to the Priesthood, thence to the Choirs of Basilicas, thence to Episcopal thrones, afterwards to the Pall of the Metropolitan, then to the purple of the Apostolate, and, finally, dream of even higher dignities. Ambition is a general pest in the Clergy, says the same St. Bernard; by lawful or unlawful ways, says St. Cyprian, they aspire to the chief places; and

whereas Ecclesiastical dignities (says St. Gregory) should be an occasion of humility, ambitious men desire them as a position of eminence. Let us carefully examine our hearts, lest we discover there this pest of ambition; and, if we do so discover it, let us cure ourselves of it before it destroys us; let us pray to our Heavenly Physician, Who is meek and humble of heart, to deliver us from it.

2. *Cast Thyself down.* The consequence of ambition is a fall. When a man thinks of rising to the highest posts and usurping sublime functions, he is sure to be cast down; says St. Ambrose. How many, says St. Augustine, have found the occasion of their eternal ruin in ecclesiastical honours! And, in another place, he says that the most frequent and most powerful temptation of our state is that of governing the Church without calculating its dangers. We ought to meditate on two beautiful maxims of St. Bernard, in order not to desire a place "upon the pinnacles of the temple," and in order to avoid the "cast thyself down." The first is, that elevation is usually succeeded by a fall; the second, that, if we desire to attain higher rank rather than perfect sanctity, we must not expect an eternal reward, but only ruin. Seek not to raise thyself to a rank which entails upon thee arduous labours, if thou desirest not to expose thy soul to the danger of perdition. "My son . . . trust not thyself in a rugged way, lest thou set a stumbling-block to thy soul" (Eccles. xxxii. 25).

3. *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* With these words, taken out of Deuteronomy, our Saviour answered the Tempter, who had distorted and misinterpreted the passage quoted from the Psalms. Here is a great secret revealed to us; and it is this (says St. Ambrose), that, when tempting Priests, Satan is wont to transform himself into an angel of light, offering specious pretexts and even the authority of Holy Scripture, in support of ambition. The devil frequently suggests to us that, if we attain that position to which ambition carries us, and if we find perils in it, we shall be sustained by the arm of the Almighty. Then let us reply to him, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Let us answer him, with St. Chrysostom, that it is a diabolical act to incur peril wilfully, and then to expect God's assistance. Let us recur to the thought of death, and of the strict account which Prelates must

then give to God: so (as St. Lawrence Justinian tells us) shall we avoid all desire to rule in the Church.

"Thou wilt save the humble people, but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud."—*Ps.* xvii. 28.

"Give me not haughtiness of my eyes, and turn away from me all coveting."—*Eccles.* xxiii. 5.

THURSDAY.

TEMPTATIONS TO AVARICE.

I. THEY ARE SEDUCTIVE.
II. THEY ARE SHAMEFUL.
III. THEY ARE FATAL.

"Again the devil took Him up into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him: All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan, for it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve."—*St. Matt.* iv. 8—10.

1. *All these will I give Thee.* The devil transported Jesus to a very high mountain, and there, in a moment, he placed before Him a seductive image of all the kingdoms of the world; he showed Him their greatness, their glory, their magnificence; and he promised Him the possession of all, if He would but adore him. This was the temptation of Avarice; this was another snare spread before the feet of the Saviour by the Enemy of mankind. Thus would our great High Priest be tempted even in this point, that He might the better compassionate His Priests in their frequent temptations to Avarice: "for we have not a High Priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but one tempted *in all things* like as we are, without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). He knew

how seductive is this temptation; He knew under what flattering promises of happiness it presents itself, and with what chimerical pictures of prosperity;—how often it conceals itself under the most specious pretexts of justice and honesty, so as even to seduce the Pastors of the flock: "the shepherds themselves have turned aside into their own way" (Isa. lvi. 11). Hence St. Bernard deplored this vice as common even in Prelates. He deplored the avidity after temporal goods, and the indiscreet use of them, which he declared to be most frequent both in the Clergy and the Laity. So seductive is Avarice that it causes both large and small birds to fall into its net: "for, from the least of them even to the greatest, all are given to covetousness; and, from the prophet to the priest, all are guilty of deceit" (Jer. vi. 13). Let us examine our heart, let us guard against this sin of covetousness, which St. Chrysostom calls the worst of all passions.

2. *If falling down Thou wilt adore me.* The word "fall" shows how Avarice causes an Ecclesiastic to sink down from his proper dignity and to fall into sin. St. Irenæus says, that the devil himself confesses that to do his will is to fall from the glory of God. And what is Avarice, if not adoration of the devil and a service offered to idols? "Covetousness, which is a serving of idols" (Eph. v. 5). What a disgrace it was to the Levite to abandon the worship of the true God for the worship of an idol, in the house of Michas,—for the trifling promise of a little money, a double suit of apparel, and good food (Judg. xvii. 10)! But is it not a still greater disgrace for a Priest to abandon the worship of God, Whom he has chosen for his portion and his inheritance, for the worship of gold, which is the worship of the devil? What a reproach to make use of holy things, nay, of God Himself, for the sake of enjoying money! Truly, this is the disgrace of a Priest, as St. Jerome says; for this cause the Clergy fall into discredit, and innumerable sins are committed. Is it possible that I can have contributed to this discredit? Can I have profaned the sacred Ministry by Avarice? Pardon me, O my God!

3. *Him only shalt thou serve.* We dedicated ourselves to God's service from the moment we received the Tonsure, and therefore (says St. Augustine) we owe service to Him alone. But Avarice is

blind, says St. Ambrose; it sees not those things which promote God's glory, but only those which satisfy covetousness. We are the servants of God; we ought not, therefore, to serve Mammon; nay, as the Council of Trent enjoins, we ought to avoid even the suspicion of doing so. Hence, a holy Pontiff (St. Clement) exhorted Priests to flee Avarice more than any other vice. St. Jerome observes that it is a special injury to the God Whom we serve, to render religion an occasion of traffic rather than of honour to Him. Let us pray to Almighty God to deliver us from this fatal passion.

"Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness."—*Ps.* cxviii. 36.

"With Thee, O Lord, are riches and glory, glorious riches and justice."—*Prov.* viii. 18.

FRIDAY.

THE BENEFIT OF MEDITATION ON THE NAILS AND SPEAR OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I. THEY ARE THE SYMBOL OF OUR SINS.
II. THEY ARE THE SUPPORT OF OUR RIGHTS.
III. THEY ARE THE REMEMBRANCE OF OUR DUTIES.

"But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers, with a spear, opened His side."—*St. John* xix. 33, 34.

1. *When they saw that He was already dead.* As gold is the symbol of charity (Apoc. iii. 18), so is iron the symbol of sin. Not without mystery is it written that "iron is taken out of the *earth*" (Job xxviii. 18); for (says Venerable Bede) the ground of

our bodies brings forth sin; and he was of the sons of men, not of the sons of God, who "was a hammerer and artificer in every work of brass and iron" (Gen. iv. 22). Sinners sit "bound in want and in iron" (Ps. cvi. 10), for they wear "chains of iron and a yoke of iron" (Jer. xxviii. 13, 14). Therefore did the iron of our sins sharpen the iron of the Nails and of the Spear: "iron sharpeneth iron" (Prov. xxvii. 17), and iron truly "breaketh into pieces and subdueth all things" (Dan. ii. 40): and thus sin was capable of causing the death of God. We read of Joseph, that "the iron pierced his soul" (Ps. civ. 18), which (as St. Augustine remarks) was not literally true in him, but was verified in his great Prototype, Whose Body was pierced with material iron, whilst the iron of sin entered into His Soul: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (St. Matt. xxvi. 38). With Holy Church let us weep over our sins, which directed the soldier's spear and sharpened its deadly point. Let us weep, as those who have renewed the Passion and death of their Lord.

2. All our rights spring from the plentiful Redemption which Jesus Christ has wrought for us; and that Redemption was plentiful, because the Nails gave back again to the Tree all that Adam had taken from it: "Then did I pay that which I took not away" (Ps. lxviii. 5). By means of these Instruments, Divine Justice received far more than had been taken away: "She hath received of the hand of the Lord, double for all her sins" (Isa. xl. 2). For Christ restored a fruit far better than that which our first parents stole, and while their theft was of short duration, Christ hung for three hours on the Nails. If the apples they took were but two, the Nails were four in number. Therefore do the Instruments of the Passion concur in restoring our lost rights, by way of merit, by way of satisfaction, by way of sacrifice, by way of redemption, and by way of efficacy; says St. Thomas. And if the Priest's hands work so great wonders,—if his feet are prepared to carry the Gospel of peace,—if our heart be furnished with charity proper to our state,—we ought to refer all to the Passion of Christ, and consequently to the Instruments which rendered it so bitter and so ignominious: "by which He hath given us most great and precious promises" (2 Pet. i. 4). If we lead souls to Heaven, it

we embrace sinners, we owe it to those Nails, which held Jesus suspended in the air, with hands outstretched; for (says St. Chrysostom) in that He died lifted up from the earth, He prepared for us a means of ascent to heaven. . . . . He died with hands outstretched, so that with one hand He might draw to Himself His ancient people, and with the other hand the Gentile world. Let us then venerate these Instruments, consecrated by the Saviour's Blood. When we celebrate Mass, and when we say the Divine Office, let us excite our devotion and meditate attentively on such august mysteries.

3. Meanwhile, let us reflect that these same Instruments remind us of our obligation to crucify our "flesh with its vices and concupiscences" in union with Christ crucified. When He was nailed to the Cross, He seemed incapable of all action, yet He was then most active and worked the greatest marvels. Nailed to the Cross, He blotted "out the handwriting of the decree that was against us . . . fastening it to the Cross" (Col. ii. 14). Nailed to the Cross, He despoiled "the principalities and powers" of Hell, and "hath exposed them confidently in open shew, triumphing over them in Himself" (Col. ii. 15). Nailed to the Cross, He hath drawn all things to Himself (St. John xii. 32). Nailed to the Cross, He conquered kings and held them subject before His Cross; says St. Augustine. In fact, the power of Jesus was hidden in the Nails: "Horns are in his hands, there is his strength hid" (Hab. iii. 4, 5). Here is a great lesson for Priests. The more they are held fast, as with nails, the better do they exercise their ministry; and these nails are, the fear of God and of His commandments; the precepts of the Church and Her canons; obedience to Prelates and to their commands. Holy Priests, with these nails in their hands and in their feet, have executed wonderful works, have saved many souls, have enriched themselves with merits. On the other hand, the Spear, which opened the Heart of Jesus, furnished a "fountain" of cleansing for sinners. Let us then consider that if, with the spear of contrition, we are pierced in our heart (Acts ii. 17), we shall easily excite sinners to penance, washing them with the Blood and Water which flowed from the *Immaculate* Lamb. What truths, what mysteries are these! Let

us fix our attention on these truths, that we may profit by them, and that we may pray, and rule ourselves more carefully in the exercise of our ministry.

"Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear."—*Ps.* cxviii. 120.
"With Christ I am nailed to the Cross."—Gal. ii. 19.

SATURDAY.

MARY DEFENDS PRIESTS FROM TEMPTATIONS.

I. She frees them from the assaults of the Devil.
II. She procures for them the presence of the Angels.
III. She causes them to be assisted by Angels.

"Then the devil left Him: and behold Angels came, and ministered to Him."

1. *Then the devil left Him.* In telling us that the devil left our Lord Jesus Christ, the Evangelist teaches us, that the Evil Spirit yields to true virtue; and though, as St. Ambrose says, he ceases not to envy, he shrinks from pressing his temptations, through fear of too frequent discomfiture. Therefore we need true virtue, in order to be able to resist the devil, and to drive him from us. Now, to whom should we have recourse, if not to Mary, in order to obtain this true virtue, so as to be able to recover ourselves amidst temptations and to see the Prince of darkness depart from us? For (says St. Cyril) through Her assistance the demons are put to flight, and the tempter is cast down from heaven. She knows that, because we are God's servants, the devil assails us with especial eagerness and assiduity; and therefore (says St. Germanus), no sooner do we invoke Her sacred name, than She is on the watch to keep us safe and free from harm. The more we are engaged in honouring Her, and in promoting Her honour, the more will

She protect us; for, as St. John Damascene says, She is the powerful protectress of those who honour Her. We are the chief part of the Church, and therefore are we especially protected by Her, Who (says St. Dionysius of Carthage) is appointed by God protectress of His whole household. We are the advanced guard of the Church in Her combats with the devil; and Mary (says St. Thomas of Villanova) is the Tower of David, in which hangs the armour of the strong.

2. *And behold Angels came.* In declaring that, after our Lord's temptation, Angels drew near to Him, the sacred text points out, as St. Hilary explains, that, if we overcome temptations, the same heavenly messengers will come to us to congratulate us on our victory. The Blessed Virgin, who is "Queen of Angels," sends them also to guard us, in order that, as we resemble them in our Ministry, so we may be kept like them in holiness. This is an office which befits one who bears the title of Queen of all Saints both in heaven and earth. She knows how intimate are the relations between the Sacerdotal order and Herself, and therefore She defends the Priesthood with especial care. St. Augustine says, in regard to Priests, that, as the womb which bore the Saviour for nine months was called blessed, so our hearts, in which the same Saviour comes daily to take up His abode, are also blessed; and, if the paps which gave Him suck are blessed, blessed also is the mouth of him who eats His flesh and drinks His blood. Thus it is Her part to guard so great dignity in us; for (says St. John Damascene) She is the Guardian of the servants of Her Son; and, guarding us by means of the holy Angels, She shows Herself to be, as She truly is, the keeper of the Altar and Temple of God.

3. *And ministered to Him.* The Angels ministered to our Saviour; but we know not how they thus aided Him. We do know, however, that they assist Priests, not only in the dangers of private life, but also in the exercise of their ministry. The Blessed Virgin sees, that to their weakness is committed a charge, far more excellent (as St. Bernard declares) than the charge committed to Angels, and therefore She obtains for us the special assistance of the Angels; and no one (says St. Germanus) can *obtain this,* or any other favour from heaven, except by Her

intercession. If Almighty God deigns to send His Angels for our defence, to intercede for us, and to drive away the devil from us—to invite us to good, to suggest words to us, and to console us in affliction—then let us remember that, as St. Bernard says, He gives us nothing which does not pass through the hands of Mary. How great confidence should we then have in this Mother; how ready should we be to invoke Her name in order to overcome temptations, and to obtain the especial protection of the Angels! Let us raise up in our hearts this confidence in Her, and let us ever have recourse to Her patronage.

"Keep Thou my soul, and deliver me; I shall not be ashamed, for I have hoped in Thee."—*Ps.* xxiv. 20.

"Do thou call upon the Lord, and speak to the king for us, and deliver us from death."—*Esther* xv. 3.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

TO MEDITATE ON PARADISE IS PARTICULARLY USEFUL TO PRIESTS.

I. FOR THE RIGHT EXERCISE OF THEIR AUTHORITY.
II. FOR A SUPPORT IN THE TOILS OF THEIR MINISTRY.
III. FOR THE CAREFUL GUARDING OF CHASTITY.

"Jesus taketh unto Him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart."—*St. Matt.* xvii. 1.

1. *Jesus taketh Peter.* Our Saviour chose three only of His disciples to be witnesses of His Transfiguration, because they were the most deserving of the honour; says St. Chrysostom. Peter was the first of those chosen, because of the authority and power which shortly before had been committed to him; and, in very truth, the more sublime the authority which we exercise, the greater need have we to keep ever before our eyes the reward promised to those who employ it aright. Hence this same Peter,

in exhorting Priests to feed the flock, "*not by constraint, but willingly, according to God*," so as to be a pattern of the flock, immediately sets before their eyes the "never-fading crown of glory" which they should receive (1 Pet. v. 1—4). Unless we frequently meditate on heavenly glory, we shall easily abuse the authority which is given us, by employing it for destruction, not for edification, although Christ gave it "unto edification, and not unto destruction" (2 Cor. xiii. 10). Let us then meditate on the glory which the Pastors and Teachers of the Christian people will have in heaven, as the reward of their charity, as the price of their zeal, as the recompense for that glory which so many souls have attained through their labours. Let us then use every effort to obtain this prize; for it is, as St. Thomas explains, a peculiar privilege—a special "aureola," or circle of glory—reserved for those who have been Teachers in the Church, as the reward of the victory obtained over the devil through the doctrine which they have taught and preached.

2. *And James.* James, as destined to be the protomartyr of the Apostles, was likewise admitted to this entrancing spectacle, says St. Bonaventure. He is generally considered the type of those who suffer afflictions, and who exercise their patience in the active life. And, most certainly, they who have to suffer much for the love of God in the work of the ministry, have need to meditate often on the happiness to come and continually to bear in mind the Apostle's words: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). If zealous Priests had not this lively hope of future blessedness, they would be "of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. xv. 19). Therefore, as Venerable Bede shows, all who suffer for the Apostolate witness the Transfiguration in the person of St. James. Such Priests tread a difficult and rugged way, and therefore is it necessary that they strengthen themselves with the contemplation and hope of its joyful termination; says St. Thomas. They will participate in the martyr's crown; for St. John Chrysostom ranks the constant martyrdom of a zealous pastor before the martyrdom of many who have *given their life* for Jesus Christ in one single act.

3. *And John his brother.* John was chosen for his virginity, and all Virgins are designated in him, says St. Bonaventure. The chastity to which Priests are bound demands many sacrifices, many precautions, many combats; as St. Jerome shows. On the one hand, it is fitting, says St. Augustine, that the King of Virgins should have Ministers stainless in soul and body, free from all corruption of the flesh, and resplendent with the glory of chastity; and, on the other, it is necessary that the latter should guard their exterior and interior senses,—that they should mortify their flesh, turn away from many allurements, and curb "the law of sin," which "in our members fighteth against the law of our mind" (Rom. vii. 23). Hence, Jesus Christ (says St. Thomas) encourages them with the hope of a special "aureola" or crown in heaven; He entices them with the promise of fruit a hundredfold, if only they be free from subjection to the flesh; He promises chaste Priests that in heaven they shall sing that most sweet Canticle which virgins only can sing: "They sung as it were a new canticle . . . and no man could say the canticle but these . . . who were not defiled with women" (Apoc. xiv. 3, 4). Other Saints, says St. Gregory, may listen to this Canticle, but they will not be able to sing it. They "shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Apoc. xiv. 4); that is to say, says St. Augustine, they shall have joy of a kind distinct from that of all the rest—the joy of the virgins of Christ; a joy which comes from Christ, a joy in Christ, with Christ, after Christ, through Christ, for Christ; a joy peculiar to the virgins of Christ. Let us then meditate on our Father's house, and let us meditate on the glory which is there prepared for us before the rest of God's children if we keep our chastity unstained; for, says St. Gregory, in the mansions of the Eternal Father, virgins are preferred before the other children. Let us pray to God, let us trust in Him, that as He has begun this work in us, so He would confirm it, and perfect it.

"Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest in Thy holy hill?"—*Ps.* xiv. 1.

"Thy salvation shall be for ever, and Thy justice shall not fail."—*Isaias* li. 6.

MONDAY.

THE GLORY OF PRIESTS IN HEAVEN.

I. THE NATURE OF THEIR TRANSFIGURATION.
II. THE BRIGHTNESS OF THEIR GLORY.
III. THEIR JOY IN ADORNING CHRIST WITH HIS GARMENTS.

"And He was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow."—*St. Matt.* xvii. 2.

1. *And He was transfigured before them.* The Transfiguration of Jesus was a type of our transfiguration; and therefore (says St. Thomas) it was fitting that He should show His disciples the glory of His brightness. We, indeed, look for the transfiguration of our body in the general Resurrection, when our Saviour "will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the Body of His glory" (Phil. iii. 21); but, before this comes to pass, another transfiguration is promised to the souls of Priests, as heirs of heavenly glory. The soul shall pass from the miseries of this life to that which St. Augustine calls the summit and store-house of all good; for, as the same Father says in another place, beatitude is promised to our souls, and the resurrection to our flesh. They shall be transformed into the glory of Angels, and shall become like them in beatitude; for (says the same St. Augustine), cannot God make Angels out of men, Who made man out of nothing? The sacerdotal character will no longer be hidden, but will be manifest, and will show its identity with the Priesthood of Christ, of Whom it was said: "Thou art a Priest for ever" (Ps. cix. 4). *This august* character will receive its consummation from Jesus.

In glory, says St. Thomas, they will reign with Him for ever, without fear of losing this kingdom: "He hath made us a kingdom, and Priests . . . for ever and ever" (Apoc. i. 6). They will sit on the same throne with Christ: "I will give to sit with Me on My throne" (Apoc. iii. 21); and finally (as far as is possible for a creature) they will be transformed into God Himself: "We, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image" (2 Cor. iii. 18). In other words, by the intuitive vision of God, we shall become like Him: "we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). Let us carefully meditate on the importance of these truths, and so animate our hearts with lively hope.

2. *His face did shine as the sun.* The brightness with which the Blessed are enriched proceeds from the light of glory, which renders them capable of beholding the essence of God, and from the light of God Himself Whom they behold. This is signified by the words of the Psalmist: "In Thy light we shall see light" (Psalm xxxv. 10). The splendour of the risen body will proceed from the light which is in the soul, in the same way (says St. Thomas) as the brightness of our Lord's face in His Transfiguration proceeded from the glory of His soul, which, from the first moment of Its conception, enjoyed the Beatific vision. Let us call to mind that many Priests, who have gone before us, are now beholding this immense, incorporeal, incomprehensible, unfailing, uncreated, perfect light; and that they enjoy this great good because of the prayer which our Lord Jesus Christ made to His Father for the first of His Priests: "I will that where I am, they also . . . may be with Me, that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me" (St. John xvii. 24). This vision reflects so great brightness in them, that, among all those who have attained to the Beatific vision, they will shine most gloriously. For the brightness of the saints is not alike for all; but "star differeth from star in glory" (1 Cor. xv. 41); and it is certain that the most glorious brightness is reserved for those, who are distinguished by heavenly science and have instructed others in it: "they that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity" (Dan. xii. 3).

Finally, when we meditate on the glory of Priests, let us remember that St. Paul argues thus :—that, if the glory of Moses, for the ministration of death and for a temporal law, was great, far greater will be our glory in respect of the ministration of the Spirit—a glory which shall last for ever. Hence he concludes: "That which was glorified in this part, was not glorified by reason of the glory that excelleth: for if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is in glory" (2 Cor. iii. 10, 11). Who is there who would not ardently desire this glory? What sacrifice can seem too hard for those who desire it?

3. *And His garments became white as snow.* Isaias speaks of the members of the Church triumphant as the ornaments of Christ: "thou shalt be clothed with all these as with an ornament" (Isa. xlix. 18). Hence, in the white garments of our transfigured Lord, St. Gregory beheld all the saints, who are, as it were, bound to Christ, bright with the light of Justice; and therefore St. Mark adds that "His garments became shining . . . so as no fuller upon earth can make white" (ix. 2). This denotes that the Faithful cannot have the brightness on earth which they will have in heaven. Then will Priests, while they themselves form part of these glorious garments, have the joy of discerning those other souls, whom, by their ministrations, they have purified, as far as might be, from earthly things. With most lively joy will they behold the joy of their Lord at seeing Himself adorned with these glorious garments; and they will understand that, had they presented to Him immense treasures of gold and silver, they could not have given Him so rich an offering as this; for, as St. Chrysostom declares, no gift is equal in His sight to that of a soul saved. The glory of these garments will be the glory of the Priest: for His glory is theirs, says St. Prosper. Who would not labour to attain so great a good? Who would not pray to our Lord for light and strength, in order to gain the kingdom of heaven?

"As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God."—*Ps.* xli. 1.

"How great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of His possession."—*Baruch* iii. 24.

TUESDAY.

PRIESTS OUGHT OFTEN TO RAISE THEIR EYES TO PARADISE.

I. THEY WILL THUS CHEERFULLY OBEY THE LAW.
II. THEY WILL PROFIT BY READING THE SCRIPTURES.
III. THEY WILL PREPARE A LIVING TABERNACLE FOR JESUS.

"And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias, talking with Him. And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias."—*St. Matt.* xvii. 3, 4.

1. *Moses.* Moses appeared in the Transfiguration as the representative of the Law, of which he was the promulgator; and, in good truth, on the keeping of the law depends salvation: "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (St. Matt. xix. 17). But, in promulgating the Law, Moses promised a land flowing with milk and honey; whereas Jesus Christ (says St. Chrysostom) promises us Heaven. Our Divine Lord, on the other hand, when He promulgated His new Law to His first Priests in the Sermon on the Mount, repeatedly promised the "Kingdom of Heaven" as their reward; an expression which, as St. Augustine remarks, is peculiar to the New Testament. The eight Beatitudes conclude each with this same promise, though in varied terms. Our Lord wished to render His yoke sweet to His Apostles (and, through them, to us) by raising in their hearts a desire for a recompense worthy of God; for (says St. Augustine again) every task is light, if we consider the reward; and this hope is the solace in

labour. Even if we have sometimes to do violence to ourselves in observing the law, let us take courage by repeating St. Jerome's words: "It is hard, it is a grave matter, it is difficult; but *great is the reward.*"

2. *And Elias.* Elias represented the Prophets who declared God's word. Now we Priests have the Prophets in our hands and read their sacred utterances, which continually place Heaven before our minds and increase to a marvellous extent our hope of this reward; so "that through patience, and the comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4). The Scriptures are as letters from Heaven, exhorting us to a good life in order that we may reach that country from whence they are sent; says St. Augustine. Priests hold the key of the eternal kingdom, and this key is Holy Scripture. Let us then attentively meditate upon the truths contained therein,—truths which will lead us to Paradise, and the knowledge of which will endure for ever. They are the ladder, says St. Isidore, by which we ascend to God: therefore let us profit by so great means of salvation.

3. *Let us make here three tabernacles.* Inebriated by the beauty of the spectacle, St. Peter spoke without understanding what he said. Thou desirest, O Peter, to build three tabernacles, and rememberest not that thou art destined to rule the Church, which (says St. Jerome) is the one only Tabernacle of the Gospel. Wilt thou then make three tabernacles? Nay, thou shalt make but one; namely, for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; thou shalt labour all thy life long to build the spiritual Tabernacle of God on earth: "behold the Tabernacle of God with men" (Apoc. xxi. 3). One day thou shalt say: "The laying away of this my tabernacle is at hand" (2 Pet. i. 4),—that tabernacle, in which has dwelt the most holy Trinity; and thence thou shalt pass to the eternal Tabernacles. We, who participate in St. Peter's Priesthood, whilst we labour to form a living Tabernacle for Christ by the sanctification of souls, aspire also to the heavenly Tabernacle. This is our consolation (says St. Thomas); and, if we have to suffer contradiction, persecution, calumny, let us "be glad and rejoice, for our reward is very great in heaven" *(St. Matt. v. 12).* Great rewards are not attained without great

labour (says St. Gregory). Let us, then, pray to God to assist us with His grace, and (as St. Augustine enjoins) let us not grow weary of praying until we attain our blessed end. Let us be careful to guard this tabernacle, which now we use in this our pilgrimage and warfare—for our true dwelling-place is in heaven. Here we have but a tabernacle, there an abiding home. Let us be careful to prepare an eternal habitation for the Majesty of God, built up of living and elect stones, and so, as good and faithful servants, shall we enter into the joy of our Lord.

"I have inclined my heart to Thy justifications for ever, for the reward."—*Ps.* cxviii. 112.

"If you return and be quiet, you shall be saved: in silence and in hope shall your strength be."—*Isa.* xxx. 15.

WEDNESDAY.

THREE ERRORS, TO WHICH PRIESTS ARE LIABLE, IN REGARD TO THE ATTAINMENT OF HEAVENLY GLORY.

I. DESIRING THE BRIGHT CLOUD WITHOUT THE DOVE.

II. COVETING THE INHERITANCE WHILE THEY DISREGARD THE PRIVILEGE OF THEIR ADOPTION.

III. EXPECTING TO SEE CHRIST, WHILE THEY REFUSE TO HEAR HIM.

"And as He was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshaded them; and lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."—*St. Matt.* xvii. 5.

1. *A bright cloud overshaded them.* In asking to remain upon Tabor, St. Peter was a type of some Priests, who are unmindful of the great saying of St. Leo, that we must first be beggars of

suffering, then of glory. The Holy Spirit appeared first in the form of a Dove, and afterwards in the form of a bright Cloud. This was a sign that we must preserve the innocence and simplicity which He gives in Baptism, as represented by the Dove, if we would arrive at that brightness of eternal glory, that relief from every form of evil, which is the portion of the elect in the Resurrection, as represented by the bright Cloud. So St. Thomas. Let us examine our heart, and see whether it be pure from all sins, as befits our state; for (says St. Peter Damascene) he who is God's Minister should blush to be the servant of sin. Let us remember that it was said to the Priests and Levites, "Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord" (Isaias lii. 11). Now we (says St. Augustine) have the charge, not only of sacred vessels of gold and silver, but of the Faithful also, those most precious vessels, purchased with the Blood of Christ. The other significations of the Dove remind us of our Priestly duties, especially of meekness, simplicity, sorrow for sin, concord, fruitfulness in good works. Cornelius à Lapide points out, that the Holy Spirit often showed Himself visibly in the form of a Dove, when He desired to consecrate, assist, and glorify the most famous Doctors, Bishops, and Pontiffs of the Church; and the same writer mentions many instances of such manifestations, as related in the Annals of the Church. After accompanying us through the course of this life, this Holy Dove will one day change its aspect; that is to say, it will surround us with brightness and consolation in Heaven, and will cause us to behold with unveiled face those mysteries which we now receive by the light of faith.

2. *This is My Son.* We received our imperfect adoption in Holy Baptism; we expect its perfection in glory. We are now sons of God; but our glory is not yet manifest, because we have not yet gained access to our paternal inheritance. "We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2). If we bear ourselves like good sons, and sons better than our brethren, we shall be heirs of our Heavenly Father, and joint-heirs with His Son (Rom. viii. 17); and this *inheritance* will be the more abundant, inasmuch as we have

specially chosen God for our inheritance at the reception of the Tonsure, when we declared, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup; it is Thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me" (Ps. xv. 5). Hence, in speaking of the labourers in the Lord's vineyard, St. Chrysostom said: "Do we, indeed, run in vain? Do we labour in vain? Contemplate the reward, which Christ promises thee in the person of the faithful and wise servant, whom He sets over all His goods." Therefore, have thy conversation in Heaven, think of the countless Priests who already possess that inheritance, and pray them to help thee to attain the same blessedness.

3. *Hear ye Him.* He who hears Christ shall see Him seated at the Right Hand of the Father; for He has said, "My sheep hear My voice" (St. John x. 27). He who really desires so great a good, listens willingly to His instructions, and fulfils them, —in the understanding by Faith, in the affections by charity, and in effect by obedience (says St. Bonaventure). This is the condition on which Jesus Christ promises the reward of eternal glory; on this depends the greatness, the abundance, and the eternal duration, of that reward. If this be true of all the Faithful, what must be the folly of a Priest who lays claim to the vision of Christ without having first heard Him and imitated Him? If we would be good Ministers of Christ, we must first follow Him on earth, and then may we hope to be with Him in Heaven hereafter. "If any man minister to Me, let him follow Me, and where I am there also shall My minister be" (St. John xii. 26). By following His instructions and serving Him, we shall please His heavenly Father and merit also the praise of men; for he "that serveth Christ pleaseth God, and is approved of men" (Rom. xiv. 18). Let us trust in Mary's intercession, let us beg Her "to speak to our heart," to give us "a teachable heart," and to obtain for us that we merit "the crown of justice."

"We pass through fire and water, bring us out into a refreshment."—From *Ps.* lxv. 11.

"With the hearing of the ear I have heard Thee, but now my eye seeth Thee."—*Job* xlii. 5.

THURSDAY.

THE PREACHING OF PARADISE.

I. THE OMISSION OF THIS SUBJECT A SERIOUS LOSS TO THE FAITHFUL.

II. BY TOO LOFTY A STYLE WE RENDER OUR PREACHING INEFFECTIVE.

III. WE PREACH WITHOUT UNCTION, UNLESS WE FIRST PRACTISE MEDITATION.

"And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of Man be risen from the dead."—*St. Matt.* xvii. 9.

1. *Jesus charged them.* When our Saviour commanded His disciples not to make known His Transfiguration before His death, He implied at the same time that after His death they should reveal it. Each of these three disciples, therefore, was silent until the prescribed time; according to the text: "A wise man will hold his peace till he see opportunity" (Eccles. xx. 7). But the time of speaking follows the time of silence. There is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Eccles. iii. 7). St. Peter, indeed, was not content with proclaiming this great event by word of mouth, but left also for our instruction a written narrative of it in his Epistles. Now, in the person of St. Peter, all Priests are charged with the same obligation of speaking on this subject; they are not at liberty to omit to preach either *on the* Transfiguration or on the glory of Heaven. And if the

Faithful were but frequently reminded of these things, there would be far less tepidity in prayer, less negligence in good works, and a more vigorous resistance to temptation, than is now commonly found amongst them. For (as St. Chrysostom remarks) there is no means of strengthening and improving the condition of the soul more effectual than the raising in it of the hope of future happiness. Our Saviour, in His divine knowledge of that which most easily moves the human heart, often promised Paradise, and often threatened hell; but, in regard to Paradise, He did more than promise it (says St. Chrysostom again); He vouchsafed to show us a specimen of it. And yet many Priests, discouraged by the difficulty of the subject, neglect to speak of it in Missions and Spiritual Exercises, and even in Lent; thus sacrificing the profit of others to their own vanity. Let us not act thus, but rather (with St. Leo) rejoice that our future happiness is so far beyond the grasp of our intellect and beyond the power of words to describe. Although in itself ineffable, such a subject furnishes us with an opportunity of setting forth an abundance of most useful truths. We cannot lead the Faithful to love by fear alone, and no one can run well a race without having the goal before his eyes.

2. *The vision they had seen.* The Apostles who had been admitted to this spectacle, narrated it after Christ's Resurrection; and they did so with apostolical simplicity. If we followed their example in discoursing on Paradise, how great advantage would the Faithful derive from our preaching! As St. Gregory says, all things earthly would seem vile to them in comparison with Heaven. But the lofty style of some Orators adds a fresh difficulty to a subject in itself most difficult; for those good things (says St. Bonaventure) are so vast, so exalted, so countless, so far exceeding all human imagination, or hearing, or thought, that it would be folly to attempt to explain the nature of such happiness. A Priest, however, is bound to speak of it; for (says St. Augustine) these abundant riches, this brilliant splendour, can form the subject of our praises, though we cannot explain the nature of such heavenly things. It suffices to remind Christians that Heaven is their destiny, and that Christ died to purchase it for

them; whereas hell is prepared not for us, but for the devil. It suffices to remind them that heavenly glory is one of those works of God which are infinite, and that therefore God Himself could not make it better than it is. It suffices to remind them that Paradise is the consummation of all that the human heart can desire—nay, that it infinitely surpasses all desires in the tranquillity of its delights, in the eternity of its happiness, in the blessedness of its eternity (says St. Thomas). To see God, to possess Him, to enjoy Him, to be in the society of His Saints, to abound with all the delights of Heaven without fear of ever losing them—these and the like thoughts are adapted to the capacity of any hearers. Such ideas, if presented to their minds with plainness and simplicity of language, must surely be intelligible to all, must inspire them with fervent delight and incite them to strive more and more earnestly for the attainment of this eternal bliss. Let us determine thus to profit by the light which God has afforded us.

3. *They came down from the mountain.* Our Saviour enjoined the preaching of Paradise when He came down from the Mountain. This mountain is a figure of meditation and prayer (says St. Bonaventure); for it is good to withdraw ourselves from the crowd and from earthly things, in order that we may be apt to receive Divine revelations. When the Priest has carefully meditated on eternal blessedness, he becomes fit to speak of it with spiritual unction; and, by the contemplation of the eternal country (says St. Gregory), he becomes in a way detached from earth, and raises himself to heaven. But, on the contrary, if his thoughts are ever bound to earth, he will be able to speak only of the earth, or after an earthly fashion. "He that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh" (John iii. 31). This is the reason, why so many discourses on Paradise are sterile and tedious,—why those who hear them sigh not after the heavenly Jerusalem, nor say to Jesus, as the Queen of Saba to Solomon: "Blessed are thy men, and blessed are thy servants, who stand before thee always" (3 Kings x. 8). We ourselves are not moved, *because* we have not made this the subject of our meditations; *and for* the same reason we have so great horror of death, so

great a desire of long life, and of an easy, joyful, voluptuous life. Let us pray to Almighty God that He would vouchsafe to inspire us with a relish for meditation on this great truth.

"Jerusalem . . . let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember thee."—*Ps.* cxxxvi. 6.

"We will make known Thy might to the sons of men, and the glory of the magnificence of Thy kingdom."—From *Ps.* cxliv. 12.

FRIDAY.

THE FIVE WOUNDS OF OUR CRUCIFIED LORD REMIND PRIESTS OF THREE THINGS.

I. A REPROACH TO BE AVOIDED.
II. A PATTERN TO BE IMITATED.
III. A REFUGE FOR SHELTER.

"But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers, with a spear, opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water."—*St. John* xix. 33, 34.

1. *When they saw that He was already dead.* It would seem as if Jesus, from the Cross, said to His Priests: "Attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow" (Lam. i. 12). In the most sensitive parts of My body, in those parts where so many nerves meet, you behold Me hanging from four wounds, and therefore is My torment most bitter. Moses grew weary of lifting up his hands, and was stayed up by Aaron and Hur (Exod. xvii. 12); but I, during My three hours' Agony, had no other

stay than My patience. My Body was enfeebled by all the outrages I had endured; My failing limbs, My torn shoulders, My thorn-pierced head, forced Me to rest on My very Wounds; whilst My Father refused Me all comfort, and My enemies insulted Me: "Evils without number have surrounded Me" (Ps. xxxix. 13). My Body was more exquisitely sensitive than other men's bodies; for it was formed by the Holy Spirit in such a manner as to be specially capable of suffering, so as to render My sacrifice the more complete. Therefore said I to My Father: "A Body Thou hast fitted to Me" (Heb. x. 5). I withdrew not My attention from My grievous sufferings, but exercised all My inferior faculties to their fullest extent, in order that I might be in very truth "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity" (Is. liii. 3). Another wound was opened in My side and in My heart, and so insult was added to the pain of My Wounds: "They have added to the grief of My wounds" (Ps. lxviii. 27). Behold what I have done for you, and for your brethren! What will you render Me in return? What will you do, to be Ministers worthy of Me, co-operating with Me in the salvation of souls? If you do anything for Me, remember that I have done infinitely more for you. You have not resisted unto blood; nay, you have not shed one single drop for Me, or to hinder offences against Me: "You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. xii. 4); and yet you glorify yourselves on account of some little labour, some little suffering, some little sacrifice!

2. Let us consider the infinite efficacy of these Wounds; so that we may learn that our Priesthood should be an energetic and effective one, and that deeds are more powerful than words. Ecclesiastics, who talk much, but do little or nothing, merit nothing but contempt. Our Saviour, on the Cross, uttered only seven most short sentences; all the remainder of the time He spent in "strong crying and tears," with which He accompanied His Sacrifice (Heb. v. 7). His Wounds, by increasing His pain, increased His merit, and opened the "Saviour's fountains" (Isa. xii. 3); in them were written the names of all the redeemed: "I have graven thee in My hands" (Isa. xlix. 16), so that St. Augustine said to Him: "Read that writing and save me." In His

Resurrection also these Wounds proved that He had assumed true flesh, and that with the same flesh He had risen again (St. John xx. 20). They are, as it were, five eloquent mouths, with which Jesus pleads our cause at the Right Hand of the Father and on our Altars: "Always living to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25). With these Wounds He inspires us with confidence, He consoles us in our afflictions, He excites us to repentance, He invites us to love Him. Therefore, if our hands drop not blood, at least let them "drop with myrrh," according to those words of the Canticle (v. 5), which St. Gregory explains as spoken by the Church of her labourers, who strive in God's cause even to death. Let our feet be employed in the service of the Gospel of peace; as again it is said in the Canticle: "I have washed my feet" (v. 3), words which St. Augustine refers to the Preachers of the Gospel. Let us bear in our heart the wound of zeal, and of continual grief for the loss of souls; as St. Paul declared that he had "continual sorrow in his heart" (Rom. ix. 2): and thus shall we imitate our Lord in His sacred Wounds. Have we done so in time past? Is this our resolution for the future?

3. Jesus invites souls to find a sanctuary in His Wounds: "Come . . . . my dove, in the clifts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall" (Cant. ii. 14). These clifts of the rock (says St. Gregory) are the Wounds of His hands and of His feet; the true hollow place of the wall is the Wound which the spear made in His side. For Christ may be compared to the "rock" and to the "wall:" insomuch as He was mortal and passible, He was like the "wall;" but after His Resurrection He showed Himself to be a most solid "rock." Here let the Priest seek refuge, and he need not fear the assaults of any enemy. For here (says St. Bernard) the dove is secure from the hawk, however closely he may hover round her. This refuge is attained by the contemplation of Christ's Passion and of His glory; for the one is in the rock, the other in the wall (says the same St. Bernard). It is attained by enkindling His holy love in the soul; for those five Wounds are very furnaces of Divine love. It is attained by confidence in Christ's Passion; for (says St. Ambrose) the Lord's Passion is thy strength. Let us then shelter ourselves in this

refuge, and let us invite thither the timid, that they may be encouraged,—the lukewarm, that they may become fervent,—and sinners, that they may be touched with compunction of heart.

"Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest."—*Ps.* liv. 7.

"What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands?"—*Zacharias* xiii. 6.

SATURDAY.

MARY'S ESPECIAL CARE IN LEADING THE MINISTERS OF HER SON TO GLORY.

I. THEY FEAR DAMNATION.
II. MARY ENCOURAGES THEM.
III. SHE SHOWS THEM HER SON.

"And the disciples, hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said to them: Arise and fear not. And they, lifting up their eyes, saw no man, but only Jesus."—*St. Matt.* xvii. 6—8.

1. *They were very much afraid.* The voice, announcing the glory of the Head and of His members, which should have comforted the disciples, terrified them and cast them down; for (says St. Jerome) human weakness cannot stand in the blaze of so great glory, but, losing courage, it trembles and falls to the ground. This is the case with Priests, who consider, if they know not their own measure, that their fall will be the greater in proportion to the height of glory to which they aspire (as St. Jerome also says). The more exalted the dignity, the greater the perils of a Priest (says St. Chrysostom). Lofty is his rank (says St. Bernard), and therefore great also is the risk of falling. Our obligations are wider in extent and of graver importance than those of ordinary Christians;

our temptations more frequent; our weakness is proved by experience; the judgment of God is known to us in all its severity. Such considerations have inspired the holiest Priests with fear; and even St. Paul, the great vessel of election, uses these words: "Lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away" (1 Cor. ix. 27). If he could express such a fear, after all his preaching, and after the vast results which it had produced throughout the world, what is our case? In what terms can we speak of ourselves?

2. *Arise, and fear not.* If Christ encouraged Apostles, he encourages Apostolic men in these days by means of His Mother, Whom He has constituted the dispenser of all grace. It is a probable belief (says Suarez) that Mary not only surpasses every Saint in the perfection of the Beatific Vision, but surpasses them all taken together. She has the privilege (says St. Bonaventure) of being, after God, the chief cause of our glory and of our joy. She is the hope of all who have recourse to Her, of all who praise Her, of all who honour Her (says St. Andrew of Crete). Hence She is especially the hope of Priests, who not only pay her this homage themselves, but strive to promote it amongst the Faithful. At the foot of the Cross a Priest was given to Her as Her son, and thus she became the Mother of the first Priests and the especial protector of all Priests (as Cornelius à Lapide shows). May we not, then, hope for Her assistance in all our necessities? Let us but trust in Her, and we shall not find our confidence misplaced.

3. *They saw no one, but only Jesus.* The Apostles saw Jesus again in the aspect of love and gentleness, and they no longer feared. Christ thus showed them that He alone is able to save (says St. Bonaventure). Now it rests with the Divine Mother to show Him to us after this present exile; and therefore the Church prays to Her in these words: "After this our exile, show us the blessed fruit of Thy womb, Jesus." After Christ, the Saviour, She also may with truth be called our saviour (says St. Anselm). St. Bernard speaks of Her as the "salvation of the world;" but in a particular manner is She the salvation of Priests, for She is bound to them by special ties, and has many titles in common with them.

She is even called by St. John Damascene, the "Priest of God;" by St. Augustine, the "Minister of Christ," because She served Him with most exact fidelity and devotion. She is called by St. Antoninus, the "Church of God;" and St. Bernadine of Sienna says, that, if we are "dispensers of the divine mysteries," She is the dispenser of heavenly graces, ordained from all eternity. Mary, therefore, will lead us to see Her Son and to enjoy Him for ever, as She has already led us to the Priesthood and to the functions of the Ministry.

"Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me."—*Ps.* xxii. 4.

"He that shall find Thee shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord."—From *Prov.* viii. 35.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

DANGERS TO WHICH CONFESSORS ARE EXPOSED IN THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

I. From not realising the greatness of the work.
II. From vain-glory.
III. From Persecution.

"And Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb; and when He had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke, and the multitudes were in admiration of it. But some of them said: He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils."—*St. Luke* xi. 14, 15.

1. *When He had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke.* This deaf

and dumb devil was the type of sinners, and therefore St. Matthew calls him blind also (xii. 22). For (says St. Bonaventure) sin renders a man deaf to the hearing of the truth, blind to the sight of it, dumb in confessing it. But the work which Jesus Christ performed once only, He performs daily in the conversion of sinners by means of His Ministers (says Venerable Bede). Now, if Priests understand not what they are doing in absolving the sinner, and if their mind be not thoroughly illumined in this matter by the light of Faith, they incur danger of wrongly administering the Blood of Jesus Christ, of rashly setting forth, and incautiously exercising, this Divine Ministry. Thus, while driving away the devil from others, they may be at the same time affording him an entrance into their own hearts. Rightly, therefore, does the Church admonish them (at their Ordination as Exorcists) to "cast away all uncleanness and impiety of mind or body, lest they should fall into the power of these same evil spirits which are driven out of others through their ministry." Let us then consider that the absolution of a sinner is a greater work than the creation of the universe (as St. Augustine says); for, in the Creation, Almighty God gave being to that which was not, whereas, in the conversion of a sinner, He gives His grace, His friendship, and even Himself. Then He dispensed natural gifts, now He dispenses supernatural gifts; then He benefited that which was without merit, now He benefits in spite of demerit; then He worked without resistance, now He has to conquer the rebellious will of an enemy; then He said, "Let this be, and all things were made," now the conversion of the wicked has cost Him the Blood of His beloved Son. So St. Thomas. And all this is effected by our words! What power is thus entrusted to us! What a work it is which we perform! Do we consider its importance? Do we prepare ourselves for it sufficiently? Do we execute it with due attention of mind?

2. *The multitudes were in admiration.* The multitudes were astonished, not only because they saw our Lord Jesus Christ deliver him who was possessed by the devil, but also (says St. John Chrysostom) because He did it with such readiness and facility. On this account (says St. Cyril) they praised and glori-

fied this miracle. In these days, if a Missionary convert many sinners, if a Confessor have many penitents, he is much talked about, he is the subject of exaggerated praise. This is in itself a terrible temptation to the human heart; for (says St. Basil) it despoils the man of the merit he had acquired, and instils a deadly poison into his mind. It is the cause of immense ruin; for vain-glory is the mother of hell (says St. Chrysostom). If Priests delight in hearing the praises of men, they are no longer the salt which seasons the earth, but the salt without savour, to be trodden under foot by men. The enemy of souls corrupts their Ministry, so as to turn all its goodness into evil. If you are perfect, or if you desire to become perfect, remember that this vice of vain-glory is above all others to be avoided with the greatest watchfulness (says St. Augustine).

3. *He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.* How horrible was this calumny! What an outrage upon the Majesty of God, Who had come into this world that He might overcome the Devil! Such is the effect of envy. It will lead men to any lengths, it heeds not what it says, if only it can say something to damage the reputation of others. No calumny seems too extravagant or too outrageous, so long as it can answer this purpose. And shall we complain of any calumny which the world's malice may raise against us, in the exercise of our office as Confessors? Let us remember the words: "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, for My sake" (St. Matt. v. 11). If only these two conditions are fulfilled, viz., the falseness of the slander, and the endurance of it for God's sake, we ought to suffer calumny with good courage, knowing that it is a means of increasing our merit (as St. Gregory tells us). It is true that "oppression troubleth the wise, and shall destroy the strength of his heart" (Eccles. vii. 8); but (as St. Jerome points out in his commentary on this passage), it is the imperfect, not the perfect wise man, who is here spoken of; for no calumny can disturb him who is perfect in wisdom, whereas he who has not this perfection easily gives way either to sadness or to fear, and transgresses the Divine law (says St. Ambrose). These, then, are our dangers; let us provide against them and keep

clear of them as far as we can, and let us leave the rest in God's hands.

"The perils of hell have found me: I met with trouble and sorrow, and I called upon the name of the Lord."—*Ps.* cxiv. 3.

"O my Lord, who alone art our king, . . . my danger is in my hands."—*Esther* xiv. 3, 4.

MONDAY.

CONCORD IS MOST NECESSARY FOR THE CLERGY.

I. IT IS A SIGN OF HEAVENLY PROTECTION.
II. IT IS A MEANS OF AVOIDING RUIN.
III. IT IS A SHIELD AGAINST THE ASSAULTS OF THE DEVIL.

"And others, tempting, asked of Him a sign from heaven. But He, seeing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall. And, if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because you say that through Beelzebub I cast out devils."—*St. Luke* xi. 16—18.

1. *Asking a sign from them.* A special sign of the Divine protection of the Church is the maintenance of concord among the Clergy; and this is a far greater sign than any of the miracles which the Pharisees rashly demanded of our Lord. They wished to see the sun stand still, as Josue caused it to stand still in the midst of heaven (Josue x. 13)—or thunder and lightning to burst out suddenly, as Samuel caused it to thunder with a great thunder (1 Kings viii. 10)—or fire to come down from heaven, as Elias brought it down (3 Kings xviii. 38). But God works a far greater wonder than any of these, when He makes His Priests to be of one mind, and "maketh them to dwell" in concord "in a house," *i.e.*, His own House, which is His Church (Ps. lxvii. 7);

when He maketh "brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. cxxxii. 2); when He maketh "the Faithful to be of one mind and one will," according to the Church's prayer. For this wonderful gift the Son of God Himself prayed to His Eternal Father: "I pray," said He, "that they all may be one . . . that they also may be one in Us . . . that they may be made perfect in one" (St. John xvii. 21—23). In these words, He asked thus repeatedly that His disciples might be one in mutual love and in harmony of will (as St. Hilary explains); He asked that they might not be divided one from another by diverse pleasures and desires, or by the defilement of sins (as St. Augustine says); He asked, too, that their concord should serve for the edification and for the conversion of the world; for nothing (says St. Chrysostom) causes such great scandal as discord among Priests. Have we this sign of the Divine protection, or have we lost it through our own fault? The Church orders us to pray to God for concord and peace: do we make this prayer according to the spirit of the Church? When we give the Kiss of Peace in the Mass to our brethren, is it the real expression of our heart?

2. *Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation.* St. Jerome says that with concord small things acquire strength, whilst discord brings the greatest things to ruin. All who are acquainted with Ecclesiastical history know the immense injury which schisms have brought upon the Church, and how fatal have been the scandals occasioned by the dissensions of the clergy. Well may we exclaim with St. Chrysostom: How great an evil is division, how great a good is concord! Whenever discord finds place in the hearts of Ecclesiastics, death gains an entrance among them and among the people. "Their heart is divided, now they shall perish" (Osee x. 2). If kings cannot reign without peace, so neither can the kingdom of God, which is the Church, flourish without it (as St. Augustine says). The Church made great progress when she was, according to the words of the Canticle, "as a piece of pomegranate" (Cant. iv. 3), that is to say, when by charity and peace (expressed under the symbol of the pomegranate) the Faithful "had but one heart and *one soul*" (Acts iv. 32). But the Enemy came secretly, and

"over-sowed cockle among the wheat" (St. Matt. xiii. 25); for it is the devil's work to root up peace (says St. Augustine), in like manner as it is God's work to plant it; and (as St. Cyril says) the devil roots up peace in order that he may become master of the harvest and make it desolate. Let, then, each Priest examine himself, and see whether, through a spirit of malignity, he merits the execrable name of "a man of strife, a man of contention" (Jer. xv. 10). Almighty God will require of each an account of all the sins he has occasioned by discord, and of all the good which he has hindered by the same means. A Priest who lives in strife is the object of God's detestation; for "His soul detesteth . . . him that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. vi. 16, 19). Let him bitterly lament over his sins, let him labour to restore concord and to repair all the evil which he may have brought upon the Church.

3. *How shall his kingdom stand?* Although the devils are without mutual charity, and have the fiercest hatred against one another, yet they are associated together with remarkable unanimity in persecuting Christians. They form a single body, which may be compared to "molten shields, shut close up, with scales pressing upon one another; one is joined to another, and not so much as any air can come between them" (Job xli. 6, 7). In this way does the kingdom of Lucifer subsist, and will subsist, in sinners. "He is king over all the children of pride" (Job xli. 25). Priests must labour to establish concord and true brotherly love, in opposition to this union of their infernal enemies. Thus will they furnish a strong wall of the city of God; for "a brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city" (Prov. xviii. 19). They will have all in common; the combat and the labour, the reward and the crown,—these will be shared by all alike, if many are united in one, instead of standing each one alone (as St. Basil says). So, will the Church be "terrible as an army set in array" (Cant. vi. 3). For, (as St. Gregory explains these words) if we are as a spiritual army drawn up in array against the hosts of evil spirits, we must take special care to be united together in charity, so as to form a compact body, not broken up by discord. Let us, then, use all diligence "to keep the unity of

the spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3). This (as St. Chrysostom declares) is of more value than money, nobility, and power. Let us be ready to make any sacrifice for the sake of peace; let us keep our passions in subjection, for they are the chief source of dissensions and strife. "Whence are wars and contentions among you? Are they not hence from your concupiscences?" (St. James iv. 1). Surely, a Priest can have no higher claim to honour than the efforts he has made to extinguish strife, to reconcile those at variance, to maintain union amongst both the clergy and the people, and, at any rate, to abstain altogether from strife. To be a man of peace is indeed the most glorious title—for it is to be a true child of God. It is an honour for a man "to separate himself from quarrels" (Prov. xx. 3). Let us pray to our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may become thus like Him, Who is the Prince of Peace.

"With them that hated peace, I was peaceable."—*Ps.* cxix. 7.

"Confirm, O God, the concord of brethren, and the love of neighbours."—From *Eccles.* xxv. 2.

TUESDAY.

THREE THINGS TO BE CONSIDERED IN EXERCISING THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION.

I. THE CHARGE COMMITTED TO US.
II. THE WORK DONE BY JESUS CHRIST.
III. OUR RELATION TO OUR PENITENTS.

"Now if I cast out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I by the finger of God cast out devils, doubtless the kingdom of God is come nigh to you. When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things are in peace which he possesseth. But if a stronger than he come upon him and overcome him, he will take away all his armour wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils."—*St. Luke* xi. 19—22.

1. *They shall be your judges.* We are the judges of men's consciences—not only their fathers, physicians, and teachers, when we exercise our ministry of reconciliation and cast out the spirits of evil from the hearts of sinners,—but also judges. Thus, the Priests of the Old Law were types of the Priests of the New Covenant, when they were charged "to view the leper, and . . . to judge" (Levit. xiii. 13). Let us, then, learn from theologians how we are to discern between "leprosy and leprosy" (Deut. xvii. 8); that is, between sin and sin, and how we should judge in regard to the penance which we ought to impose "without respect of persons" (1 Peter i. 17). Let us remember that the Council of Trent teaches that the Absolution of the Priest is a judicial act, and that it belongs to him to judge and to pronounce sentence. Of what vast import is this judicial act! What

knowledge, what attention, what impartiality, what virtue does it not require in him who exercises it! "You exercise not the judgment of man, but of the Lord, and whatsoever you judge, it shall redound to you" (2 Paral. xix. 6). We judge, in God's name, of offences committed against God, and of the satisfaction due to God; therefore will every perverse judgment redound upon ourselves, because "being ministers of His kingdom we have not judged rightly" (Wisdom vi. 5).

2. *If a stronger than he come upon him and overcome him.* Whenever we attempt to drive the devil from men's souls, let us remember that we could do nothing if the power of Jesus had not conquered the devil on the Cross, and if He did not still by His grace act upon their hearts. He is the source of all strength: "If strength be demanded, He is most strong" (Job ix. 6). He is "Wonderful, Counsellor, God, the Mighty" (Isa. ix. 6). On the Cross (says St. Leo) with the nails which pierced His hands and feet, He transfixed and killed the devil. If we perceive that our penitents are led to see their true condition—that they are awakened from their lethargy,—that they comprehend the enormity of their sins, weep over them, detest them, discover them without false shame, avoid sinful occasions, and undertake a mortified life —in short, if all the works of the devil are weakened and destroyed,—let us acknowledge the power of Jesus Christ in all this, and let us be careful not to attribute it to ourselves: "The Son of God appeared that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). We are but rude instruments in His hands, and the honour of the victory over the enemy must be referred to Him Who is "the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle" (Ps. xxiii. 8). Let us give thanks to our Heavenly Father "Who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 57).

3. *And will distribute his spoils.* What are the spoils which Jesus Christ takes from the devil and distributes to others? They are the souls of sinners, who had been entangled in his snares. Although indeed Jesus Christ is the Master of these spoils, which He has taken from the Enemy, He deigns to concede a portion of this glory to His Ministers, making them also "de-

spoilers of Egypt" (says St. Bonaventure). David was a type of Christ, when, after plundering the Amalekites, he distributed the spoils, and sent gifts to his friends, the ancients of Juda (1 Kings xxx. 26). Let us then look with joy and tenderness upon sinners who present themselves to us; for they are most precious spoils, snatched from the devil, and committed to us, that they may be to us a treasure and a crown of everlasting glory. In the hands of the enemy they were vessels of wrath, but in our hands (says St. Bonaventure) they become vessels of mercy. Let these words of Almighty God sound ever in our ears: "Hasten to take away the spoil, make haste to take away the prey" (Isaias viii. 3). Let it not escape thee; hasten, lest it fall again into the enemy's hands. So shall "the captivity that was taken by the mighty be delivered" (Isa. xlix. 25). What a hope is this! What a powerful motive to labour! God grant that we may understand it.

"Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knoweth right well."—*Ps.* cxxxviii. 14.

"Who shall know Thy thought, except Thou give wisdom."—*Wisdom* ix. 7.

WEDNESDAY.

THE PRIEST WHO WORKS NOT WITH JESUS, IS AGAINST JESUS.

I. IN THE DOCTRINE WHICH HE TEACHES.
II. IN THE EXAMPLE WHICH HE SHOWS.
III. IN THE LABOURS IN WHICH HE IS ENGAGED.

"He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth."

1. *He that is not with Me is against Me.* To be with Christ signifies, in the first place, to profess His doctrine; for by holding opinions opposed to that doctrine we render ourselves His enemies. From the moment that the Church has proposed a doctrine for belief, the question is for ever settled; from the moment that the Supreme Pontiff has condemned a proposition, or prohibited a book, we are no longer free to dissimulate, to doubt, to consult men's tastes, or even to be neutral. We must boldly declare for submission and obedience. To act otherwise is to contend against Christ. "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publicans" (St. Matt. xviii. 17). When the Supreme Pontiff speaks, St. Peter speaks by his mouth, just as Christ spoke by the mouth of St. Peter. Blessed Peter, persevering in his own See, presenting the truths of Faith to those who seek for them (as St. Peter Chrysologus says), is himself the Teacher of Teachers. Confessors, therefore, should keep ever before their eyes "condemned propositions," in order to avoid them—the decisions of the Roman Congregations, in order to

follow them—the Pontifical Decretals, in order to comply with them. For this reason the "Moral Theology" of St. Alphonsus Liguori is to be carefully studied, as it observes this rule so strictly. How many Priests have been lost through ignorance of the Supreme Pontiff's words! How many are tormented in hell for having despised them! They were not on the side of truth, and therefore they heard not Christ's words; for He said, "Every one that is of the truth, heareth My voice" (St. John xviii. 37). Had they known the truth in theory and in practice, it would have delivered them from hell. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (St. John viii. 32).

2. *He that is not with Me is against Me.* He who follows not Christ's example declares himself a follower and slave of the devil; for (says St. Jerome) Beelzebub desires to hold men's souls captive, our Lord to set them free . . . . the devil entices them to sin, Christ calls them back to virtue. How, then, can there be concord between the followers of Christ and the followers of the devil, when their works are so opposite? The good Priest, therefore, is one who works according to the heart of Jesus. "I will raise me up a faithful priest, who shall do according to My heart, and My soul" (1 Kings ii. 35). The good Priest is one who can say to the Faithful, with the Apostle: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). The good Priest is one who "shows" himself "an example" to the Faithful "in good works" (Titus ii. 7). Hence St. Jerome admonished Heliodorus, that the eyes of all were upon him, upon his house, and his conversation; that he was set, as it were, upon a watch-tower, as a master of public discipline. Therefore let us ask ourselves, what example we have hitherto given to our people,—whether we have raised the standard of vice or of virtue, whether we have shown ourselves sons of Christ or sons of Belial. May Almighty God preserve us from becoming like the sons of Heli, who were indeed priests of God, but at the same time sons of the Evil one. "Now the sons of Heli were the children of Belial" (1 Kings ii. 12).

3. *He that gathereth not with Me, scattereth.* He who co-operates not with Christ in the salvation of souls, destroys those who belong to Christ (says St. Chrysostom), and drives them to perdi-

tion. Christ came "to gather together the children of God that were scattered" (St. John xi. 52). He came "to assemble the fugitives, and to gather together the dispersed from the four quarters of the earth" (Is. xi. 12); that is to say, He came to gather them into one fold, one Church,—to unite them under one Head, in the same Faith, with the same Sacraments; and He desires to unite them in the bond of charity. The Priest who is not thus minded, and who, in the exercise of his Ministry, does not labour for this end, will easily cause the sheep to be scattered abroad (St. John x. 12). If he who co-operates not with our Lord is His enemy, far more His enemy (says St. John Chrysostom) is he who hinders and opposes the operations of grace. What, then, will be the lot of Priests who, for the sake of indulging their vanity, covetousness, anger, and evil desires, scatter the flock of Christ? "The whirlwind" of God's anger "shall scatter them" (Isa. xli. 16). Deliver me, O my God, from so great misery; suffer me to co-operate earnestly with Thee for the salvation of souls. Let my voice, my example, my labour, be directed to this end so long as I live: "As long as breath remaineth in me, and the Spirit of God in my nostrils . . . . my lips shall not speak iniquity" (Job xxvii. 3).

"I am become as a beast before Thee, and I am always with Thee."—*Ps.* lxxii. 23.

"Who hath resisted Him and hath had peace?"—*Job* ix. 4.

THURSDAY.

HOW TO TREAT RELAPSED PENITENTS.

I. To receive them without harshness.
II. To treat them without laxity.
III. To raise them from their miserable state.

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest; and, not finding, he saith: I will return into my house, whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there. And the last state of that man becometh worse than the first."—*St. Luke* xi. 24—26.

1. *He taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself.* When a sinner is converted, the devil, who is driven from that soul, can find no rest. He goes through dry and barren places, and then returns to visit his first dwelling, with the firm resolution of recovering possession of it. In order to succeed in his undertaking, he associates with himself seven other spirits still more wicked and more skilful than himself. What wonder is it, then, if a frail man, after long habits of sin, should fall again? Let us consider that the number seven often represents universality; so that this alliance of seven spirits signifies the combination of all the powers of evil to ruin that one soul; as St. Ambrose points out. Shall not we, then, compassionate the relapsed? Shall we be surprised at seeing them return to their vomit? Let us rather fear for ourselves; for we, too, are liable to stumble at every step, and it may easily happen that, in punishment of our harshness towards these unhappy men, we also may fall into sin. "If a

man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual instruct such a one, in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1). It often happens that Almighty God suffers the Confessor to fall into the same faults, that he may know himself to be but man. "That the Gentiles may know themselves to be but men" (Ps. ix. 21). A good Confessor, therefore, when he hears the confessions of others, would say, with trembling, "To-day this one; to-morrow, perchance, myself." How often, in the fervour of prayer, have we not proposed to cure ourselves of some fault, and yet we have again fallen into it! And though, like "the sons of Ephraim who bend and shoot with the bow," we were skilled in war, like them also we have shamefully "turned back in the day of battle" (Ps. lxxvii. 9). St. Chrysostom makes reflection that we ought to imitate the meekness of Jesus Christ, who never dealt hardly with sinners. Such has been the conduct of all holy men in exercising the ministry of Reconciliation. Have we followed their example? Do we intend to do so for the future?

2. *And entering in, they dwell there.* While we try to avoid an excess of vigour, we must not, on the other hand, fall into laxity; that is to say, we must not absolve those who are ill disposed, in whom the evil spirits "have established their dwelling." Almighty God warns those Confessors who absolve habitual and relapsed sinners, without discerning any signs of a true change of will, that they shamefully deceive their Penitents, imparting a false peace to their conscience, and assuring them that they have made peace with God, when it is not so. "They healed the breach of the daughter of my people disgracefully, saying, Peace, peace, and there was no peace" (Jer. vi. 14). They say that they have restored lost life to souls, whereas those souls remain in a state of death. "To save souls alive which should not live, telling lies to My people that believe lies" (Ezek. xiii. 19). They soothe their wounds, but do not cure them; and so (says St. Thomas of Villanova) they take away all the sting of conscience, all horror of sin; they make them appear godly in their wickedness, while they are wicked in their seeming piety. They put them in a false *security*, from which they fall into hell. And let it not be said

that in this way we attract Penitents to the Sacraments; rather, we encourage sacrilege, and the Confessor does a serious injury both to himself and his Penitents by such ill-advised mildness; as St. Ambrose points out. How many Confessors will be cast into hell on account of laxity! Preserve us, O God, from this fault, and from its just punishment!

3. *And the last state of that man becometh worse than the first.* The Confessor's great merit consists in making habitual and relapsed sinners aware of their miserable state, and in striking them with compunction, so as to bring them to true penance. But, when we have succeeded thus far, we must measure their penitence, not by the length of time during which it has continued, but by the reality of the sorrow it has evoked. As St. Chrysostom says, we are not concerned with time, but with the correction of the soul. The question is: are our penitents really contrite? Is any true change of heart produced? In that case, all is well, the work is complete. For "an humble and contrite heart God will not despise." The teaching of Pope Leo XII., in his Encyclical bearing date Dec. 25, 1824, is well worthy of being read and considered. In giving his instructions to Confessors in regard to the Jubilee, he reproves those who think to be on the safe side by deferring Absolution. He says that, though many approach the Sacrament of Penance without the due disposition, yet, if the Priest put on the bowels of mercy of Jesus Christ, and know how to deal with them wisely, patiently, and gently, he will produce the right disposition in them. He declares, moreover, that the Priest who cannot do this is worse disposed for the hearing of confessions than his Penitents are for making them. Lastly, he teaches that those only are to be held ill-disposed, who, after having been moved to detest their sins,—after we have prayed fervently to God for them, and have exhausted every effort of charity in their behalf,—may still be found deficient in any feeling of sorrow or penitence. If we can form a prudent judgment that such is the case, then, and then only, can we regard penitents as incapable of the grace of the Sacrament. If we had but profited by these instructions, how many strayed sheep might we not have led back to the fold! Alas! we may have caused the loss of many

souls, and thus grieved the Heart of Jesus: we may have been the occasion of ruin to others! Let us implore the Almighty God to grant us light to dispose our penitents aright, and to discern in them the requisite dispositions.

"Teach me goodness, and discipline, and knowledge."—*Ps.* cxviii. 66.

"Give me Wisdom, that sitteth by Thy throne . . . that she may be with me, and may labour with me."—*Wisdom* ix. 4—10.

FRIDAY.

THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST COMMITTED TO PRIESTS.

I. TO BE OFFERED IN SACRIFICE.
II. TO CLEANSE THE CONSCIENCE OF THE FAITHFUL.
III. TO SUPPLY A MOST SALUTARY DRINK.

"There came out blood and water."—*St. John* xix. 34.

1. *There came out blood.* Under the Old Law the offering of slain beasts represented the destruction of sins, and also set forth the great truth that the just punishment of sin is death. Those sacrifices were powerless in themselves to reconcile man with God; they served only to point to the one true Sacrifice, and to show its necessity. The Saviour came, and worked "redemption through His Blood" (Eph. i. 7). He reconciled us to His Father "through the Blood of his Cross" (Col. i. 20). He reconciled us by means of His death and His Blood. "Christ died for us; much more therefore, being now justified by His Blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. v. 9). He was pleased to be partaker *of our blood*, in order that He might shed that blood for us (Heb.

ii. 14). Moreover, not content with His actual suffering and death upon the Cross, He has also vouchsafed to continue His Sacrifice by the hands of His Priests, even to the consummation of the world. Accordingly, in instituting the Sacrament of the Altar, He said, "This is the Chalice of the New Testament in My Blood, which shall be shed for you;" or, as the sacred text has it, "which *is* shed for you" (St. Luke xxii. 20). What is it, then, that we do when we celebrate Holy Mass? We renew, mystically, the shedding of that same Blood, which "speaketh better than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 24), because it crieth not for vengeance, but for mercy. If we had always this truth before our eyes in Holy Mass, how great would be our recollection and our fervour in celebrating.

2. When we give Sacramental Absolution to sinners, we sprinkle them with the Blood of Jesus Christ. Hence St. Peter, in order to explain that the Redemption effected upon the Cross is applied to them, calls the remission of sins "the sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 2). By this means sinners are cleansed from their sins, "having hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb. x. 22). In these passages of Holy Scripture allusion is made to the blood of victims, which was sprinkled for carnal purification (Heb. ix. 13). Allusion is also made to the sprinkling of the leper, who is a type of sinners, and who, by God's command, was to be sprinkled with hyssop by the Priest (Lev. xiv. 7). The sinner expresses his desire for this sprinkling when he says, "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed" (Ps. l. 9). In short, it is thus that the Blood of Jesus Christ, Who offered Himself without spot unto God, "cleanses our conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. ix. 14). Happy, then, is the Priest who "sprinkles many nations" (Is. lii. 15); that is to say, who rightly administers this Sacrament, and administers it to many, giving them by its means "grace and peace" (1 Pet. i. 2). Do we seriously consider what it is that we dispense in the Confessional?—that we dispense "not corruptible things, as gold or silver, but the precious Blood" of the Immaculate Lamb (1 Pet. i. 19)? What account shall we give Him, if we have withheld it from those who desired it, or have given it to those who did not merit it? "Give not that which is holy to

dogs" (St. Matt. vii. 6). What shameful negligence is it in a Priest not to instruct the Faithful in their Redemption, and in that fountain of cleansing which is prepared for them in the Precious Blood of Him "Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood" (Apoc. i. 5)!

3. This Blood (as St. Augustine says) furnishes us both with a laver and with drink; that is to say, not only in it may we "wash our robes and make them white" (Apoc. vii. 14), so that we may worthily present ourselves for heavenly glory, but it also forms our daily drink. "The chalice of benediction which we bless," and consecrate, and drink, "is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ?" (1 Cor. x. 16). Let us then draw near with fervour to the Sacred Banquet, in order (as St. Chrysostom says) that we may suck this spiritual milk. What Shepherd feeds his flock with his own blood? Our Great Shepherd alone does this. But how pure should be our tongue which is reddened with this awful Blood! If we are ever tempted with evil suggestions, let us remember that we have tasted the Blood of God, and so will every disorderly appetite be restrained. The temptation will cease, and the devil will fly from us more quickly than the avenging Angel fled from the Hebrew dwellings, which were sprinkled with the blood of the Paschal Lamb. Let us give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for all these means of salvation with which He has furnished us; but let us fear lest, by unworthily celebrating the Holy Mass, we render ourselves guilty of the Body and Blood of our Lord. Let us pray to Him to deliver us from so enormous a sacrilege.

"What profit is there in Thy blood if I go down to corruption?"—From *Ps.* xxix. 10.

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."—1 *John* i. 7.

SATURDAY.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN REMINDS US OF OUR PRIESTLY DUTIES.

I. THE BEARER OF THE MESSAGE.
II. THE PERSON TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED.
III. THE PURPORT OF THE MESSAGE.

"And the Angel said to Her: Fear not, Mary, for Thou hast found grace with God; behold Thou shalt conceive in Thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and Thou shalt call His name Jesus."—*St. Luke* ii. 10, 11.

1. *The Angel said to Her.* An Angel was sent to Mary to announce the Incarnation of the Word, because (as St. Dionysius points out) it was the order of divine Providence that divine things should be made known to men by the ministry of Angels; and (says St. Peter Chrysologus)—as it was an Angel who treated with the first Eve for the ruin of the human race, so likewise was it an Angel who treated with the second Eve for our reparation. We Priests are Angels or Messengers of the Lord (Mal. ii. 7), and therefore it is our office to announce "divine things to men." Our office is to treat with men concerning their *salvation*, and to make war with the Angels of darkness, who treat with men with a view to their *ruin*. It was then the Archangel Gabriel, (whose name signifies "the fortitude of God,") who was sent to Mary; and he was the same who had already announced this mystery to the Prophet Daniel, and to the father of the Precursor of our Lord (St. Luke ii.) This teaches us that we must often prepare the way for Jesus from afar, and that we must begin the sanctification of

souls from afar, in order that one day the divine Word may be as it were "formed" within them (Galat. iv. 19). That which seems remote in its consequences is sometimes of the highest moment: its fruit will be manifested in the time when God shall cause His mercies to triumph: "Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Sion, for it is time to have mercy on it, for the time is come" (Ps. ci. 14). How well did Gabriel execute his mission! Oh, that the will of God were done on earth as it is in heaven! If we were "spirits," that is to say, spiritual men, and not "flesh and blood," that is, carnal men; if, through charity, we were as "flames of fire;"—then we should perfectly fulfil our mission, and should be worthy ministers of God, "Who maketh His Angels spirits, and His Ministers a flame of fire" (Heb. i. 7).

2. *Behold Thou shalt conceive in Thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son.* At that moment Mary became, as it were, a great Priest; for in a moment the Virgin conceived a Son, and conceived Him by a word (says St. Thomas). And was not this a most sublime sacerdotal act, by which She became the representative of the Christian Priesthood, in whose hands, by the utterance of a few words, the same Son of God becomes incarnate? Moreover, Mary conceived Him in the condition of a Victim; for (says St. Thomas) Christ merited in the first instant of His conception. She offered Him then to the Father, in order to offer Him afterwards in the Temple, and lastly on Calvary. And in this way She represented Priests, who offer the same Victim with all His merits. Priests, again, should put on bowels of tenderness, in order to compassionate the weakness of others: they should "have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err" (Heb. v. 2); and St. Bernard says that, as an apple imparts its fragrance to the hand which holds it, so did Mary acquire mercy and compassion from bearing in Her womb Him Who is Mercy and Compassion. But how carefully did Mary prepare Herself for this great office! how well did she execute it! Do we prepare ourselves for our office? do we execute it with holiness and perfection?

3. *And Thou shalt call His name Jesus.* Behold the High Priest Who "cometh in by the gate, and by the way of the east" (Ezech. xliii. 1, 2). He, from the moment of His first coming into

the world, devoted Himself to His Father, began to suffer, offered Himself as a holocaust of expiation for our sins (Heb. x. 5). Let us learn from Him that the Priesthood cannot be dissevered from suffering. A Priest who is unwilling to suffer, who seeks in the Ministry ease, riches, and pleasures, understands not his vocation. He has no knowledge of Him Who is the Head and Pattern of the Priesthood. Christ was the Victim of His own Priesthood, and the Priest of His own Victim; and therefore (says St. Paulinus) He would have His priests become victims also. The sacrifice of the Altar is the prime Sacrifice, disposing us to offer the sacrifice of ourselves (says St. Ambrose). Christ, from the first moment of His Incarnation, suffered for me, became my life, my peace, my redemption; as the Apostle declares. Therefore let us remember that we are Priests for the benefit of others. Let us learn our duties from the example of our Great High Priest: "By the example I received instruction" (Prov. xxiv. 32). What ample subject of meditation have we here! what reproofs should we administer to ourselves if we carefully meditated on these truths!

"The Lord is God, and He hath shone upon us."—*Ps.* cxvii. 27.

"Blessed art Thou among women: intercede for the Clergy."—From *St. Luke* ii. and *Ant.*

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

PRIESTS MAY EASILY FALL INTO PURGATORY.

I. THROUGH A MULTITUDE OF DEFECTS.
II. THROUGH FREQUENT TEPIDITY.
III. THROUGH NEGLECT OF REMEDIES.

"Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias: and a great multitude followed Him, because they saw the miracles, which He did on them that were diseased. Jesus therefore went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples."—*St. John* vi. 1—3.

1. *A great multitude.* Great is the multitude of Priests who fall into Purgatory, because great is the multitude of their obligations, and great the multitude of defects which they commit in the fulfilment of them. In celebrating Holy Mass, in reciting the Office, in administering the Sacraments, and in example of life, the Priest's soul is easily stained by some negligence, by some dissipation of mind, by some disordered affection, by some immodesty, by some transport of anger, or such like; even though his conscience may give no warning. It must be so, from the frailty and instability of our corrupt nature (as St. Augustine says). Let us remember that "the just man shall fall seven times" (Prov. xxiv. 16), that "there is no just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not" (Eccl. vii. 21), and that "in many things we all offend" (St. James iii. 2). If we examine our conscience, can we say that it is pure from all sin? "Who can say, My heart is clean, I am pure from sin?" (Prov. xx. 9). How then shall we enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, into which "there shall not enter anything defiled"? (Apoc. xxi. 27). How

much hay, how much stubble, how much wood (that is to say, how many venial sins, with greater or less affection for sin) have we introduced amidst the gold, the silver, and the precious stones of our building? Hence the "fire shall try it . . . . . and, if any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss" (1 Cor. iii. 13, 15). Let us not say, as foolish men are wont to say: "These are small defects, there is no need to amend them." We are Priests, and therefore such venial sins as are easily pardoned in lay persons merit chastisement in our case (as St. Isidore warns us).

2. *On them that were diseased.* Tepidity is a kind of "continual sickness" (Eccl. xxx. 17), which weakens the spirit: "Every spirit shall faint, and water shall run down every knee" (Ezech. xxi. 7). This state of mind blots the soul with many defects, nay, renders good works themselves defective. For (says St. Bernard) the tepid seldom feel compunction, and then only for a brief space; their habit of thought is sensual, their speech unguarded; they are checked by no sense of shame, restrained by no discipline. Moreover, tepidity causes all spiritual strength and energy to decay. And yet this infirmity is frequently to be found in Ministers of the Altar. Only once is tepidity named in Holy Scripture, and then in reference to a Priest: "Thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot" (Apoc. iii. 16). Those who are subject to this defect often forget to do penance for the past, neglect present sins, and have no regard for the future. Thus they do nothing to stay the vengeance of the Eternal Judge (as St. Bernard points out). All this leads them to a long and terrible Purgatory, in which they will remain until they shall "repay the last farthing" (St. Matt. v. 26). Therefore, let us follow our Lord's counsel: "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him" (St. Matt. v. 25). Now, whilst we have time, let us make peace with our God, and with His Holy Law; for we have offended Him, and therefore He is called our "Adversary," as St. Jerome and St. Hilary explain. Let us bring forth fruit worthy of penance, and let us endeavour to serve Him with exactness and fervour.

3. *And there He sat with His disciples.* *Now*, our Adversary is seated with us, and is amongst us; nay, He is our daily nourish-

ment and drink. Therefore, with St. Augustine, let us say to Him with true contrition: "Purge Thou me in this life, so that nothing be left in me for the cleansing fire hereafter." We have many means of expiating our sins, of gaining indulgences, of purifying ourselves; and we know these means well. Why, therefore, do we not profit by this knowledge, and by the facility of putting it in practice? St. Eligius, Bishop of Novocomo, said to his clergy, Let us cleanse ourselves from all iniquity of the flesh and of the spirit, that we may be saved both from eternal and temporal flames. Neglect of remedies for small defects has sent many Priests to Purgatory who had shed abroad the odour of sanctity, as we read in the lives of the saints. A Religious was condemned to Purgatory for ambitiously desiring Holy Orders; a Dominican Father was detained in these flames for a little vanity in dress; a Priest is said to have merited the like condemnation for tepidity; St. Gregory tells us of another Priest who expiated in Purgatory the fault of too great deference to his adversary in controversy. It is mentioned in the Life of the Blessed Alphonsus Rodriguez, that our Lord appeared to him, threatening the Rector of his College with a severe Purgatory for too great sublimity of style in a panegyric which he had delivered. But, without all this, who is there who would not hasten to profit by the remedies which religion offers us, to avoid that Purgatory with which Jesus Christ threatens us even for an idle word? "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" (St. Matt. xii. 36). Let us, as St. Augustine enjoins, do all we possibly can to expiate our faults, because we know not the measure of the punishment we shall have to suffer for venial sins, even supposing them to have remained venial sins, and not to have reached the guilt of mortal sins.

"I have laboured in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed."—*Ps.* vi. 7.

"I feared all my works, because that Thou didst not spare the offender."—*Job* ix. 28.

MONDAY.

THE BITTERNESS OF DETENTION IN PURGATORY TO PRIESTS.

I. FROM THE EXPECTATION OF THE FUTURE.
II. FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF THE PRESENT.
III. FROM THE MEMORY OF THE PAST.

"Now the Pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand. When Jesus therefore had lifted up His eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to Him, He said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this He said to try him: for He Himself knew what He would do."—*St. John* vi. 4—6.

1. *The Pasch was near at hand.* Let us consider Priests in Purgatory ardently desiring the approaching Pasch—that is, the near "passage" to the complete, eternal Festival. Their desire (says St. Bonaventure) is far more intense than any desire whatsoever of temporal goods in this present life. They have laboured in their Lord's Vineyard, and therefore they expect rest; they have preached God and His Mysteries, and therefore they sigh to enjoy Him; they loved their Lord while they fed His flock, and therefore they desire to enjoy the eternal love of the Great Shepherd Himself; they have praised Him continually upon earth, and therefore they long to praise Him in Heaven; so that they are continually repeating, with St. Augustine, "There we shall rest and see, there we shall see and love, there we shall love and praise." They know that their brethren are already shining in the Choir of Priests; they know that many souls, saved by their ministry, await them; they know that their

Redemption is near, and that the mercy of God can apply the suffrages of the Faithful to them. Meanwhile their hope is deferred, and this is their greatest torment. "Hope that is deferred afflicteth the soul" (Prov. xiii. 12). Each one of them says to Almighty God: I am Thy Minister, "Why hidest Thou Thy face, and thinkest me Thy enemy?" (Job xiii. 24). David, desiring to appear before the face of God (Ps. xli. 3), was a figure of them; so was Absalom, beseeching to see the king, his father (2 Kings xiv. 32); and the Jews also, who during their captivity in Babylon wept bitterly at the remembrance of Jerusalem (Ps. cxxxvi. 1). Let us meditate on the torment of thus waiting for the accomplishment of our happiness. Let us enkindle in our hearts a fervent desire for Heaven, so that we may thereby be saved from the misery of that time of waiting.

2. *When Jesus therefore had lifted up His eyes . . . . and seen.* The Priest in Purgatory, raising his eyes to the great High Priest, seated at the Right Hand of the Father, beholds in himself the Sacerdotal character which unites him to Christ, whilst he is yet separated from Him by the stains which detain him in torments. He recognises the value of this character more fully than he had ever done before; he recognises the hindrances which keep him back from the attainment of the Supreme Good; and He grieves that so august a character should be soiled, like a pearl in the mud. Thus he is continually crying out to his Great High Priest: "Bring me out of the pit of misery, and the mire of dregs" (Ps. xxxix. 3). He, who was in this life in so high a place of dignity, now finds himself in the midst of common sinners, because of a little rust which he had not been careful to remove from the silver of his conscience (Prov. xxv. 4). Yet all his cries are powerless to raise him out of this fire, this abyss of torments, with which all the pain which can by any possibility be suffered in this world,—even the torments suffered by Jesus Christ and the holy Martyrs (says St. Bernardine)—will bear no comparison. What, then, should we not do to avoid this doleful prison? What penances should we perform in expiation of our sins? How earnestly should we strive to keep out of every sin! Oh! let us not slumber nor sleep; for the day of our death will come upon us as

a thief in the night; and then shall we find ourselves without the means of help. "Thou wilt sleep a little, thou wilt slumber a little . . . and want shall come upon thee as a traveller, and poverty as a man armed" (Prov. vi. 10).

3. *He Himself knew what He would do.* The Priest was well aware of what he ought to do to avoid Purgatory, and hence the remembrance of his knowledge, and of his neglect, will be a worm that "shall not die" (Is. lxvi. 24) but shall gnaw him as long as he remains in these flames. He had read, meditated, preached, on the malice even of venial sins, on their punishment, and on Purgatory. Yet his knowledge and his preaching has but aggravated the malice of his sin in the sight of that God Who washes away the stains of his soul "by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning" (Is. lxi. 4). He had preached Indulgences, "deliverance to them that are shut up" (Is. lxi. 1), and many souls had profited by them; but yet he himself had not gained fruit from them. By the Holy Sacrifice he had freed many souls from Purgatory, but he had neglected to offer that Sacrifice for himself. He took no heed of the warning voice of Divine wisdom. "Deliver thyself . . . make haste" (Prov. vi. 3). He has done nothing of all this, or has done so little that there remains much for him to suffer. Then will he cry, "Wo is me, that my sojourning is prolonged" (Ps. cxix. 5); and he will cry in vain. Let us now meditate on these sufferings, and let us pass our days in holy fear of falling into this horrible prison. "Converse in fear, during the time of your sojourning here" (1 Pet. i. 17).

"Direct my way in Thy sight."—*Ps.* v. 9.

"None is worthy in Thy sight, therefore do I implore Thy majesty, that Thou, O God, wouldst do away my iniquity."—*Holy Church.*

TUESDAY.

HOW PRIESTS CAN BENEFIT THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

I. By promoting the devotion of the Faithful.
II. By praying in the name of the Church.
III. By offering the Holy Sacrifice.

"Philip answered Him: Two hundred penny-worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. And one of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to Him: There is a boy here that hath five barley-loaves and two fishes, but what are these among so many? Then Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand."—*St. John* vi. 7—10.

1. *That every one may take a little.* In order to furnish the immense multitude of suffering souls with the Bread of Angels which they desire (that is to say, to lead them to the heavenly banquet), two hundred pence will not suffice; therefore must the Church militant on earth use great efforts to obtain their deliverance, or at least to give some amount of relief, however small, to each of them; "that every one may take a little." Hence (as St. Augustine reflects) the Church prays continually for all in general; and (as St. Bonaventure remarks) all the suffrages which the Church makes for the dead benefit them, in order that their sins may be more quickly and more easily expiated. Now, who but Priests should suggest these thoughts to the Faithful? They should tell them that "it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead" (2 Machab. xii. 46); they should often remind them of the souls bound in this prison; thus kindling brotherly charity,

and saying: "Remember them that are in bonds, as if you were bound with them" (Heb. xiii. 3). They should excite compassion for those who suffer this dreadful torment, and inculcate the teaching of the Preacher: "Shed tears over the dead, and begin to lament as if thou hadst suffered some great harm" (Eccl. xxxviii. 16). They ought, in short, according to the Divine will, to promote devotion towards the souls in Purgatory, and to maintain it in efficacy and activity; repeating the words of the Wise Man: "restrain not grace from the dead, be not wanting in comforting them that weep, and walk with them that mourn" (Eccl. vii. 37). "Take heed," O Priest, "to this ministry, which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Col. iv. 17).

2. *There is a boy here.* Each one of us is but a child; and, of ourselves, we have no strength for so gigantic a work as the deliverance of suffering souls. But, as the Blessing which the Saviour gave to the small quantity of food, enabled this boy to satisfy five thousand famishing men, so will the Priest's suffrages, aided by the merits of the same Saviour, produce a similar effect. Let us consider that Jesus Christ says to each soul: "My servant shall pray for you, his face I will accept" (Job xlii. 8). Therefore it becomes us to be first and chief in the Church in praying for the dead, because we ought to give the example, and we are better instructed than others in the efficacy of these suffrages. Nay, to us have been especially confided the so-called "common suffrages of the Church"; the Church, in fact, obliges us to implore of God peace for the departed, both at the conclusion of each Canonical Hour, and of certain other prayers; and particularly when we celebrate the commemoration of the dead. Further, the Church obliges Priests who assist in choir to recite the Office of the dead on several days of the year. Let them recollect, on these occasions, that they are speaking in the name of the Church, and are the representatives of the Christian Republic (as St. Basil reminds them). Let us fulfil these duties, not only with our lips, but with our heart; if we would treat well of so important a matter with Almighty God (as St. Bonaventure enjoins us).

3. *And Jesus took the loaves.* The bread which Jesus multi-

plied was a type of the Eucharistic Bread, that is to say, of the Bread which He multiplies daily in our hands, when we celebrate the unbloody Sacrifice. Place then, O Priest, this Bread with the Wine on the burial place of the just (Tobias iv. 18), which is in Purgatory; for (says St. Ambrose) by these words the Faithful are taught to assist at the celebration of Holy Mass and to offer their Communions for the peace of the Departed. And truly "by the blood of this testament are the prisoners sent forth out of the pit" (Zach. ix. 11); this is the Blood which God has given us upon our altars, "for an expiation" for sin (Levit. xvii. 11): this "secret present quencheth" God's "anger" (Prov. xxi. 14); that is to say (as St. Thomas explains this passage) it quenches the flames of Purgatory. One single Mass, says St. Bernardin, would be sufficient to release all souls from this Prison. What a tremendous mystery is this! When the Priest stands with outstretched arms before the holy altar, fire is extinguished, darkness is dispersed, and sorrowful souls rejoice in the pardon they have obtained. How often have the souls of Purgatory appeared and begged for these suffrages! How often have they thanked those Priests who, by the celebration of Mass, have opened the Kingdom of Heaven for them! Let us therefore in every Mass give our attention to the commemoration of the Departed, for, by each Mass devoutly celebrated, many souls are delivered; and during Mass, as many writers affirm, no torment is suffered by those for whom the Priest is praying. How great is the power thus committed to Priests! Woe to the Priest who neglects to use it aright! Woe to him, if he neglect to fulfil his obligations in offering the Holy Sacrifice for the souls of the departed!

"Who bringeth out them that were bound in strength . . . them that dwell in sepulchres."—*Ps.* lxvii. 7.

"O God, Thou hast delivered into the Priest's hand all the prisoners that were kept in custody."—From *Gen.* xxxix. 22.

WEDNESDAY.

THE INTENTION WITH WHICH WE SHOULD EXHORT THE FAITHFUL TO PRAY FOR THE HOLY SOULS.

I. To please Almighty God and His Saints.
II. To procure our own spiritual profit.
III. To do good to the living and the dead.

"And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to them that were set down; in like manner also of the fishes, as much as they would. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples: Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost. They gathered up therefore, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above, to them that had eaten."—*St. John* vi. 11—13.

1. *When He had given thanks, He distributed to them that were set down.* Jesus Christ gave thanks to His Father, and then He multiplied the loaves. He thus showed the multitude that He came from God, and fulfilled the beneficent designs of His Father towards His children. (So St. Thomas.) In like manner the Priest also shows that he is sent by God, and that he carries out the designs of our Heavenly Father, when he inculcates devotion to the Holy Souls; for then he proves himself a worthy minister of Him Who "will have mercy and not sacrifice" (St. Matt. ix. 13). God, in truth, loves the suffering souls, and causes them to suffer almost, as it were, in spite of Himself; and therefore He desires that His justice should be appeased by the meritorious works of the living, who in this way co-operate with Him in His mercy. Hence the Priest, who invites them to perform this holy work,

does what is most acceptable to the Most Holy Trinity; for, by thus assisting the Holy Souls, we hasten the accomplishment of the purposes of the Eternal Father, we give effect to the Redemption wrought by the Son, we fulfil the will of the Eternal Spirit. Such a work is also most pleasing to the Blessed Virgin, and to all the Saints, who earnestly desire (says St. Bernardin) that those souls should ascend to Paradise. Lastly, we co-operate with the Angels, to whom God has given the charge of leading souls into the "Paradise of delight," as it is called by the Church. It is to be observed, too, that the devil, who is the enemy of God and His Saints, does all in his power to oppose the dogma of Purgatory, and to hinder the suffrages of the Faithful. He acts thus by means of unbelievers, to each of whom it might be said: "O full of all guile, and of all deceit, child of the devil, enemy of all justice, thou ceasest not to pervert the right ways of the Lord" (Acts xiii. 10). Let us examine ourselves whether we have this sublime intention in preaching Purgatory.

2. *They filled twelve baskets with the fragments.* The Apostles, in gathering up the fragments, found a greater quantity of bread in their hands than there was at first. This signifies (says St. Augustine) that, in breaking the bread of the Word of God to others, we remain richer than we were before; and we ought especially to have the intention of promoting our own advantage when we inculcate devotion to the Holy Souls. St. Augustine calls the work of assisting these Souls by our suffrages one of the most holy exercises, and one of the greatest and most pious offices which man can fulfil in this present life. So do we "make to ourselves friends, who will receive us into everlasting dwellings" (St. Luke xvi. 9). God will shew mercy to us, as we have shewn mercy, and have caused others to shew mercy, to the suffering Souls. "The Lord deal mercifully with you, as you have dealt with the dead" (Ruth i. 8). This is true wisdom in the Priest, to be thus "merciful that he may obtain mercy,"—and that, not from regard to any temporal interests, but rather because he is obedient to the voice of Faith and the impulse of Charity. Are we in the number of such Priests?

3. *Which remained over and above to them that had eaten.* When

we preach about Purgatory, we do externally what Christ does internally; for, by the external ministry of the Word, we second the internal operations of Divine Mercy, which desires the good of the living and of the dead. Let us consider that Almighty God has revealed the doctrine of Purgatory, in order to confer four great advantages on the living:—first, that they may conceive a horror of venial sin, which is so severely punished in Purgatory, and so "flee from sin as from the face of a serpent" (Eccl. xxi. 3):—secondly, that each one may do penance for past transgressions, so that he may not have to expiate them in that sorrowful Prison: "Do penance, and do the first works" (Apoc. ii. 5):—thirdly, that each one may strive to release the Souls which are there detained, and thus do the good to them which he would wish done to himself: "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them" (St. Matt. vii. 12):—lastly, that these Souls may suffer lighter and shorter torments: "that Thy beloved may be delivered" (Ps. lix. 7). Here, then, is the right intention for the Priest who enters into the designs of God, Whose Minister he is. Here is the end which we ought to propose to ourselves in our public and private exhortations on this head. Let us repent, if we are conscious of having failed in this respect, and let us resolve to amend, trusting in God's grace.

"Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor, the Lord will deliver him in the evil day."—*Ps.* xl. 2.

"Remember me, O my God, for this thing, and wipe not out my kindnesses which I have done relating to the house of my God."—2 *Esdras* xiii. 14.

THURSDAY.

HOW TO INCULCATE PROFITABLY DEVOTION TO THE HOLY SOULS.

I. By setting aside all motives of self-interest.
II. By keeping free from vanity.
III. By imploring the blessing of God.

"Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is of a truth the Prophet that is to come into the world. Jesus therefore when He knew that they would come to take Him by force and make Him king, fled again into the mountain Himself alone."—*St. John* vi. 14, 15.

1. *This is of a truth the Prophet.* The multitude saw the disinterestedness of Jesus, Who asked no reward for His instructions, but, on the contrary, gave food to His hearers. Then, for the first time, they acknowledged Him to be a true Prophet; whereas they had never done so before (says St. Chrysostom), even in presence of His most astounding miracles. Let us learn from this, that, if we wish to gain the respect of our people and to render them docile to our teaching, we must show ourselves to be disinterested; and, in particular, if we wish to derive fruit from our discourses on Purgatory, we must be careful to avoid the least suspicion of being influenced by avarice. Protestant writers, who deny the doctrine of Purgatory, shamefully assert that Catholic Priests preach Purgatory in order to make money by it, to obtain the pious legacies of the departed, and to draw large alms from the purses of the living. These writers show that they have not got charity, for charity "thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. xiii. 5); all "think *foolish things*" (Eccles. xvi. 23), and they boldly maintain their

wicked errors. "The wicked man impudently hardeneth his face" (Prov. xxi. 29). There are some, even among Catholics, who consider that the Priest preaches Purgatory for his own interest, and therefore they derive no profit from his teaching, but "babble out" innumerable follies (Prov. xv. 2). Far be it from us to give any pretext for such calumnies; let us take care that "our ministry be not blamed" (2 Cor. vi. 3). Happy is the Preacher, who, having finished his discourse, can say, "I have not coveted any man's silver, gold, or apparel, as you yourselves know" (Acts xx. 34).

2. *He fled again into the mountain.* Jesus Christ fled into the mountain, when they desired to make Him king, in order to teach us to despise the honours of this world, and to desire those of heaven (says St. Chrysostom). If Priests, in speaking of Purgatory, were beyond the influence of vanity, great would be the result of their preaching. Like the Apostle, they would speak, "not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom" (1 Cor. ii. 1); and it would be manifest that "they had received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God:" they would speak "not in the learned words of human wisdom, but in the doctrine of the Spirit" (1 Cor. ii. 11, 12). But, because Purgatory is a difficult subject, and there is risk of not pleasing our hearers, of not gaining their applause, or of not obtaining plentiful alms, we are tempted to adopt a high-flown style, extravagant similes, or poetical descriptions. The consequence is, that our preaching frequently produces no substantial results. Our people are not moved by it to any practical purpose; they are not led to avoid Purgatory, or to help the suffering souls. All that is gained is the contempt of the Faithful, who see through the vanity of the preacher, and pay no regard to his exhortations; his spurious eloquence having no influence on their hearts and wills. In short, such a vain-glorious Orator will be recognised for what he is, and will be despised accordingly. "A man shall be known by his learning, but he that is vain and foolish shall be exposed to contempt" (Prov. xii. 8). Let us then resolve, in preaching or speaking of Purgatory, to be intent, not on vain-glory, but on the glory of God and our own eternal glory.

3. *Himself alone.* Jesus went up into the mountain alone; and He went up to pray. "He went up into a mountain alone to pray" (St. Matt. xiv. 23); for (says St. Augustine) the same motive which made Him fly led Him to pray. Let us, too, accompany our preaching of Purgatory with prayer, in order that God may bless our words and open the hearts of our hearers to profit by them. Let us pray that people may understand how salutary the doctrine of Purgatory is, even to the living, as leading them to the exact observance of God's law, and instilling into them that spirit of penance which (as the Council of Trent teaches) ought to animate the whole life of Christians. Let us pray that they may be taught how they can help the holy Souls, not only by alms, but by all good works, and especially by gaining Indulgences, to be applied to those souls; that they themselves "may abound in every good work" (1 Cor. iii. 13). Again, let us pray that they may be brought to see how those who do good to the souls in Purgatory benefit themselves at the same time, as well by the good work performed as by the number of advocates they will obtain with God. For, one day, those good offices will be performed for us which we have done in this life for our brethren. "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (St. Matt. vii. 2). This is the kind of teaching in which may be traced the influence of the Spirit of God. These are the lessons in which a faithful Priest will instruct his flock, rather than those subtle doctrines on which theologians dispute, and which "minister questions rather than the edification of God" (1 Tim. i. 4). This is the eloquence which God will bless; thus shall we gain merit for ourselves, thus shall we sanctify our hearers; thus shall we, in our turn, be rewarded by the prayers of those holy souls whose deliverance we have procured.

"That He may place him with princes, with the princes of His people."—*Ps.* cxii. 8.

"Let that which cometh out of my lips be right in Thy sight."—From *Jeremias* xvii. 16.

FRIDAY.

THE HOLY WINDING-SHEET IN A THREEFOLD ASPECT.

I. IN THE HANDS OF JOSEPH, WHO IS A FIGURE OF CHRISTIANS.

II. IN THE HANDS OF NICODEMUS, WHO IS A FIGURE OF THE MASTERS OF ISRAEL.

III. AS CONTAINING THE BODY OF JESUS, WHO IS THE PATTERN FOR PRIESTS.

"And Joseph buying fine linen, and taking Him down, wrapped Him up in the fine linen."—*St. Mark* xv. 46.

1. *And Joseph buying fine linen.* The honours, which Joseph of Arimathea rendered to the Saviour of the world after His death, signify the devotion with which Christians have served Him and will serve Him in succeeding ages (says St. Thomas). St. Jerome says that the holy Winding-Sheet signified, in particular, the purity with which Christians should receive Jesus Christ in their heart. Joseph, in fact, is called by the Evangelists, "rich . . . and a disciple of Jesus" (St. Matt. xxvii. 57); "a noble counsellor . . . who came and went in boldly to Pilate" (St. Mark xv. 43); "a good and a just man; the same had not consented to their counsel and doings" (St. Luke xxxiii. 50). These, surely, are the properties of a true Christian. A Christian is the "disciple of Jesus;" he is truly "rich," because he possesses the treasure of

grace; he is supremely "noble," because he is the son of God, and the heir of His kingdom; he is "bold," because he is ready to confess and defend the Faith, even before princes and rulers; he is "good," because he possesses the Holy Spirit, Who is the Author of all goodness; he is "just," because he lives by faith, which is the root of justice; and, lastly, he is opposed to "the counsels," to the "maxims," to the "works," of the world. Joseph "bought the fine linen;" he bought the Winding-Sheet: and the Christian by prayers "buys" grace and purity (Isa. lv. 1). In like manner does the Christian clothe Jesus with His glory (says St. Ambrose). If, then, we are Christians, let us recognise ourselves in Joseph; let us meditate on our dignity, let us exercise ourselves in the virtues which belong to the profession of Christianity. Have we the purity necessary to receive Jesus, and which is to be purchased of God by constant prayers? Do we reflect on the mysteries of the holy Winding-Sheet, when we handle the white linen Corporal, in which is laid the Body of Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

2. *And taking Him down.* Joseph was not alone in taking down our Lord from the Cross: Nicodemus was also present, who had brought a rich offering of myrrh and aloes to embalm the Body of Jesus. "Nicodemus also came . . . bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight" (St. John xix. 39). He was called by our Lord "a master in Israel" (St. John iii. 10); and therefore he was a true figure of Priests, who are masters of the people, and who ought to wrap the Body of Jesus,—that is, to preserve His Church in the perfection of Faith, which (as St. Ambrose says) is represented by the hundred pounds' weight of spices. In proportion as our knowledge is the greater, so much the more fragrant should be the odour of sanctity which we shed abroad among Christians. "Anoint the Body of the Lord with myrrh and aloes, that thou mayest be the good odour of Christ," says the same St. Ambrose. And, in proportion as we are more esteemed among the Masters of Israel, so much the more should the spirit of penance abound in us. This is signified by these spices, which are bitter as well as fragrant, and preserve from corruption, in like manner as penance is the surest way to preserve

Jesus Christ in ourselves without the corruption of sin. So St. Thomas. Let us remember these truths when we put on the alb, which is a figure of the holy Winding-Sheet, as was the linen tunic worn by Aaron in his priestly functions. "Aaron shall be vested with a linen tunic . . . for these are holy vestments" (Levit. xvi. 4).

3. *Wrapped Him up in the fine linen.* Jesus Christ offered His Sacrifice on the Cross with no other clothing than His shame and His blood; but after His death He would be wrapped in a Winding-Sheet, which represented the great linen sheet which St. Peter saw descending from heaven, and in which were all manner of unclean animals (Acts x. 12). For (says St. Ambrose) "In His Church, which was buried with Him, sinful men were changed into pure and holy victims." The Saviour being dead, merited no more in respect of suffering; "He rested from all His work which He had done" (Gen. ii. 2). But, as His Father, after the repose of the Sabbath, ceased not to work—for, saith He, "My Father worketh until now, and I work" (St. John v. 17),—so did our Lord Jesus Christ, even when wrapped in the Winding-Sheet, continue to work for our salvation, by virtue of the hypostatic union of the Divinity with His sacred Humanity (says St. Thomas). And what did He work? He gave command to the grave to restore death's prey; He gave command to the spiritual tomb (that is, to sin) to restore men full of corruption, who, like Lazarus, had been four days dead. "The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live" (St. John v. 25). Further, He left on this Winding-Sheet, as a perpetual miracle, the marks of His Passion, for the compunction of the Faithful and for the fulfilment of prophecy. "I have stained all my apparel" (Isa. lxiii. 3). Let us then meditate on these truths, and let us consider how we can co-operate with our Saviour in these respects for the good of His Church. Let us consider that, if Priests would deliver souls from the state of death, and cause them to rise with glorious bodies in the day of Judgment, they must bury themselves with Him (Rom. vi. 4); that is (as St. Thomas says), they must hide themselves from the perturbations of men. Let

them clothe themselves with purity and justice, and shed abroad the odour of sanctity. O my Jesus, buried for me, bury me with Thee, and render me pure and active in this spiritual sepulchre.

"Let Thy blessing be to me like the garment which covereth Him."—From *Ps.* cviii. 19.

"A linen tunic . . . after he is washed, he shall put on."—From *Levit.* xvi. 4.

SATURDAY.

THE PRIEST FINDS A PATTERN OF RESIGNATION TO THE DIVINE WILL IN MARY'S ANNUNCIATION.

I. IN REGARD TO HIMSELF.
II. IN REGARD TO GOD.
III. IN REGARD TO HIS SUPERIORS.

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to Me according to thy word."—*St. Luke* i. 38.

1. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.* Admire, O Priest, the humility of the Blessed Virgin; admire Her resignation to the Divine Will. She is chosen to be the Mother of God, and She claims no other title than that of handmaid (says St. Ambrose). This humility proceeded from the profound knowledge which She had of Herself, which caused her to perceive that by nature She was the servant of God, and consequently bound to execute His commands. She was handmaid by nature, mother by grace (says

St. Peter Damian). Priests are servants of God, not only by nature, but also by profession; for in the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, they are called to serve God and His Church; and St. Paul makes the title of "servant of the Lord" synonymous with Priest: "the servant of the Lord must not wrangle" (2 Tim. ii. 24). Therefore, if thou considerest who thou art, thou wilt recognise thyself in him to whom God says: "Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee" (Isaias xli. 9), and wilt answer Him: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (1 Kings iii. 10). When thou resignest not thyself to the Divine Will, manifested either by means of thy superiors or by other circumstances, thou dost nothing less than repeat the iniquitous words: "I will not serve" (Jeremias ii. 20). Thou wilt perceive thy mistake when thou shalt be obliged to serve God against thy will; that is, when thou shalt serve the rigours of God's justice, because thou wouldst not willingly draw near to Him in submission to the commands of His goodness: "With bit and bridle bind fast their jaws, who come not near unto Thee" (Ps. xxxi. 9). Let us reflect that one great point, in which we ought to give our people a good example, is prompt obedience to superiors.

2. *Be it done to Me.* The words "be it done," from God's mouth, called all things into existence out of nothing, established order in nature, gave life to all things. The same words, from the Virgin's mouth, gave the form of a servant to the Word of the Father; they established a new order of things, and gave a new life to the world (says St. Thomas of Villanova). The Blessed Virgin uttered these words, to express Her consent, and Her desire to fulfil without doubting the decree of Her God. "Be it done" is a sign of desire, not an indication of doubt (says St. Bernard). Earnestly did She desire that the Word of the Father should come forthwith to dwell amongst us. As St. Bernard also says, the words "Be it done," were not a mere sound, but a reality; something visible, tangible, substantial. They were an act of obedience. If only we had a more perfect knowledge of God, how promptly should we execute His Will, remembering that our Master said: "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but *the will of Him* that sent Me" (St. John vi. 38). We

should say to God: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6). So brief a sentence (exclaims St. Bernard)! yet so full of meaning and life, so efficacious, and worthy of all acceptation! Yet how few are they who speak these precious words from the heart! The greater number expect that God, or those who hold His place on earth, should say to them: "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" Are we in this number? If we find ourselves in so miserable a position, let us set ourselves right; for it is our imperfect knowledge of God which has brought us to this state.

3. *According to thy word.* Mary did not say to the Angel: "According to God's word," but "according to *thy* word;" so would She, by Her prudent and modest answer, honour the Angel who had spoken to Her in God's name. Here we have an example of the perfect obedience with which we ought to submit to those who speak in God's name. Happy obedience, excellent grace (says St. Augustine)! To resign ourselves to the will of our superiors is to resign ourselves to the will of God, and to find pretexts for opposing the will of our superiors is to find pretexts for opposing the will of God. Therefore we must sacrifice our own opinions, our own inclinations, our own habits; and, taking our cross upon our shoulders, follow the supreme Master of obedience, Who said: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (St. Matt. xvi. 24). In denying ourselves, we shall have Christ with us, we shall have life—we shall have a true kingdom, and all things (as St. Ambrose teaches). It is not true resignation to the Divine Will, if we are influenced by the hope of promotion, or by the promise of temporal goods, with which superiors sometimes endeavour to bend the stubborn will of their subjects; saying to them, as Moses said to Hobab, the Midianite: "If thou comest with us, we will give thee what is best of the riches" (Numb. x. 32). Let us rather aspire to eternal goods, which are obtained by means of resignation to the Divine Will. In order to learn the Will of God, let us submit our own will, absolutely, to that of our *superiors*, placing ourselves in their hands even as "a servant in the hand of her mistress," saying to them: "Behold thy hand-

maid is in thy own hand, use her as it pleaseth thee" (Gen. xvi. 6).

"Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God."—*Ps.* cxlii. 9.

"O master of strength, make me a man of God's will."—St. Laurence Justinian on *Is.* xlvi. 11.

PASSION SUNDAY.

THE FRUITLESSNESS OF MANY CORRECTIONS.

I. THROUGH THE EVIL LIVES OF PRIESTS.

II. THROUGH THEIR IMPRUDENCE AND HARSHNESS IN CORRECTING.

III. THROUGH THE DEPRAVITY OF THE HEARERS.

"Which of you shall convince Me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God, heareth the words of God: therefore you hear them not because you are not of God."—*St. John* viii. 46, 47.

1. *Which of you shall convince Me of sin?* The Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world, could alone say these words (says Origen). But he who would correct others to any purpose must, at least, be distinguished by integrity of life in his own person; for (says St. Thomas) a sinner is not readily believed, even when he says what is true. How, indeed, can he seek to guide others to virtue who in his own life does not resemble the God of all virtue? (asks St. Dionysius). We cannot avoid the judgment of those who are subject to us; for even our Lord Himself did not avoid it, and disdained not to ask His rebellious servants if any of them could convince Him of sin. In this respect He was typified by holy Job, who said: "If I have despised to abide judgment with my servant" (Job xxxi. 13). How often have the corrections of Bishops, Parish Priests, and others,

been thrown to the winds, or have even produced the very opposite effect to what they desired, by reason of their deficiency in this respect. Hence, the rule we ought to follow is this (which St. Isidore enjoins), viz., that in order to admonish others, we must begin with correction of ourselves. Happy he who, because of his exemplary life, can say with Job: "Hear ye therefore my reproof, and attend to the judgment of my lips" (Job xiii. 6).

2. *If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe Me?* If the truth be set forth without anger, without ambiguity, without imprudence; then correction is usually efficacious in amending the guilty and (with the aid of divine grace) in freeing them from vice: "The truth shall make you free" (St. John viii. 32). But if correction is accompanied with reproaches and anger, it is looked upon as false: "There is a lying rebuke in the anger of an injurious man" (Eccli. xix. 28). Again, if the truth is set forth without clearness, it makes no impression, it neither enlightens the understanding nor influences the will. Therefore, said the Wise Man: "I will show forth good doctrine in equity, . . and I show forth in truth his knowledge" (Eccli. xvi. 25). Correction ought to be a clear explanation of God's law, "which giveth light and understanding to little ones" (Ps. cxviii. 130). In short, our speech (as St. Isidore tells us) should be pure, simple, clear, full of gravity and honesty, full of all sweetness and grace. In order to render our correction efficacious, we should be most careful in the choice of words. The prudent man is most fitted to correct, because he weighs his words well: "The words of the wise shall be weighed in a balance" (Eccli. xxi. 28). By prudence have holy Priests become as it were giants in virtue, and have corrected whole nations: "men of great power and endued with their wisdom . . . ruling over the present people, and by the strength of wisdom instructing the people in most holy words" (Eccli. xliv. 3, 4). Therefore, before we attempt to correct any of our brethren, let us recommend ourselves to God, that He may give us light and prudence. Then, let us put before us St. Augustine's two rules: viz.—first, to remember that perhaps we ourselves may have committed the fault which we reprove in others, or at least may be liable to fall

into it; for thus, by rebuking with humility, we shall bring upon ourselves both the blessing of God and also the good will of the very persons whom we rebuke:—secondly, to examine ourselves, in order to discover whether we speak out of pure charity, or whether we are influenced by passion or by any unworthy motive. If we speak from motives of charity alone, we may be sure that anything that we may say will be well said.

3. *Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.* Sometimes correction is useless through fault of the hearers, who are not of God, and therefore do not hear His voice. They are of God (says St. Augustine) by nature, but they are not of God in respect of their vices and depraved affections. In that case let the Priest quiet his heart; for he may recognise himself in the prophet to whom God said: "They will not hearken to thee because they will not hearken to Me" (Ezechiel iii. 7), and Jesus Christ and His Apostles found themselves in far harder circumstances in speaking to the Jews. For the language of Divine Wisdom is ever distasteful to the perverse: "How very unpleasant is wisdom to the unlearned" (Eccli. vi. 21). If the disposition of their heart were good, they would hear the words of truth with pleasure: "A good ear will hear wisdom with all desire" (Eccli. iii. 3). Shall we not in such a case be moved to compassion for their blindness and hardness of heart? Let us pray to God to touch their heart, mindful of the great truth, that no one can correct a sinner whom God has abandoned: "Consider the works of God, that no one can correct whom He hath despised" (Eccli. vii. 14). The zealous Priest will weep and lament and implore God not to abandon them as a prey to the devil. Have we hitherto put in practice those rules? or has anger or contempt marred our zeal and rendered it useless, or even pernicious? Grant to me, O my God, to declare well and profitably Thy salutary truths.

"I have not hid Thy justice within my heart, I have declared Thy truth and Thy salvation."—*Ps.* xxxix. 11.

"Give me boldness, O Lord, . . . give me a well-ordered speech in my mouth."—*Esther* xiv. 12, 13.

MONDAY.

HOW PRIESTS SHOULD ACT WHEN THEY SUFFER REPROACHES.

I. THEY SHOULD ABSTAIN FROM RECRIMINATION.
II. THEY SHOULD SPEAK THE TRUTH.
III. THEY SHOULD COMMIT THEIR CAUSE TO GOD.

"The Jews therefore answered and said to Him: Do we not say well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered: I have not a devil, but I honour My Father, and you have dishonoured Me. But I seek not My own glory, there is One that seeketh and judgeth."—*St. John* viii. 48—50.

1. *Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil.* The Jews (says St. Thomas) frequently uttered these impious reproaches against Jesus. They called Him a Samaritan, because the Samaritans hated the Jews, and were hated by them, and professed a religion which was a mixture of truth and falsehood. They said He had a devil, because they supposed that His miracles were wrought by the aid of Beelzebub. Grievous, indeed, were such reproaches; but our Saviour neither showed Himself disturbed by them, nor (says St. Gregory) did He answer them with like affronts. He exercised patience, in order to teach us to exercise it, nor did He make display of His power to avenge so great an outrage, in order that man might first imitate His patience before sharing in His power (says St. Augustine). St. Chrysostom observes that our Saviour was severe when he had to reprove the *vices of* the Jews, but used only meekness in defending Him*self from* their affronts, in order to teach us to be zealous in

asserting God's honour, but regardless of our own. If, therefore, O Priest, on account of thy integrity of life, or the holy doctrine thou teachest, or on account of some fraternal reproof or other fulfilment of thy ministry, thou art reviled,—render not "railing for railing" (1 Pet iii. 9), fear neither the reproaches of men nor their outrages: "Fear not the reproach of men, and be not afraid of their blasphemies" (Isa. li. 7). God will give thee courage and patience, and so, to thy great consolation, "in thy patience thou shalt possess thy soul" (St. Luke xxi. 19).

2. *I have not a devil, but I honour My Father*, was the answer of our Lord Jesus Christ, setting forth the truth. He would not deny that He was a Samaritan, because there was one sense in which this word belonged to Him; that is, it signified "Keeper," and He is our Keeper (says St. Augustine). He denied that He had a devil, and He affirmed that He honoured His Father; and this was all He said of His own glory. Let us learn to defend ourselves against adversaries by setting forth the truth; and, if sometimes it be necessary to speak in our own praise, and to appear vain and foolish, let us remember the Apostle, who, after having related his labours, concluded: "I am become foolish; you have compelled me; for I ought to have been commended by you" (1 Cor. xii. 11). The Apostle was then obliged to speak in praise of himself, and sometimes we must do the same, in order to secure the respect due to our office and to protect the faithful from the spiritual injury which they might otherwise sustain. Sometimes (says St. Thomas) circumstances compel those who are set over others to do things which might in themselves be considered unwise, but which the particular occasion justifies. Sometimes it is necessary for Priests to justify and praise themselves, in order to rebut calumny, as did holy Job (ch. xix.); and, in that case, it is not only lawful, but it becomes necessary, to repeat the words: "My justification, which I have begun to hold, I will not forsake" (Job xxvii. 6). Nay more, it is even allowable to call to mind our own good works, when needful to restore our courage, provided that we give all the glory of them to God, after the example of David in the Psalm: "Mercy and judgment, I will *sing to* Thee, O Lord" (Ps. c. 1). With these

exceptions, we must avoid praising ourselves, lest we sin through self-complacency and vain-glory, and transgress Solomon's direction: "Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth; a stranger, and not thy own lips" (Prov. xxvii. 2). How many faults may we not have committed in this point! What abundant matter for humiliation may we find to correct our pride!

3. *There is One that seeketh and judgeth.* In any reproaches that we may endure for the love of God, let us follow our Saviour's example, Who (says St. Bonaventure) reserved all to His Father's judgment. Let us turn to Him, Who will make our innocence triumph, if not in this life, at any rate most assuredly in the next. He will multiply His blessings upon us, when He sees us slandered by worldly men; He will bring the latter to confusion, and will console His servants: "They will curse and Thou wilt bless; let them that rise up against me be confounded, but Thy servant shall rejoice" (Ps. cviii. 28). Let us turn to worldly men and remind them, with St. Chrysostom, that we care not for their calumnies, but that, one day, they will have to render a strict account of them to Him, for Whose sake we have suffered them. We have God for our Judge, Who, in the last Great Day, will manifest our patience, and the malice from which these outrages have proceeded, to the whole world: "He that judgeth me is the Lord . . . . . Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. iv. 4, 5). To Him alone it appertains to judge whether or no we be His faithful Ministers (says St. Thomas). What a consolation is it for a good Priest to rest on that Saviour Whose Minister he is! Are we acting thus, sustained by faith and hope? Let us imitate the Apostles, who exulted in suffering reproaches in the name of their Lord: "rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts v. 41).

"Because for Thy sake I have borne reproach, shame hath covered my face."—*Ps.* lxviii. 8.

"O Lord, I heard the reproaches of many . . . they shall be greatly confounded, because they have not understood the everlasting reproach."—*Jeremias* xx. 10, 11.

TUESDAY.

WHY WORLDLY MEN DESPISE THE CLERGY.

I. THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEIR USEFULNESS.
II. THEY DO NOT APPRECIATE THEIR DIGNITY.
III. THEY HAVE NO COMPASSION FOR THEIR NATURAL INFIRMITIES.

"Amen, amen, I say to you, if any man keep My word, he shall not see death for ever. The Jews therefore said: Now we know that Thou hast a devil; Abraham is dead, and the prophets, and Thou sayest, If any man keep My word, he shall not taste death for ever. Art Thou greater than our father Abraham who is dead? and the prophets are dead. Whom dost Thou make Thyself?"—*St. John* viii. 52, 53.

1. *If any man keep My word, he shall not see death for ever.* In these words Jesus Christ gave a great promise; that is, He promised eternal life to those who not only believed His words, but also meditated on them and kept them. We should keep His Word (says St. Thomas),—first, by faith and continual meditation, and, secondly, by actual fulfilment of His precepts. To the true believer the death of the body is not really death, but the passage from a temporal, miserable, and mortified life to a life eternal, blessed, and glorious. The death of the body is death only for sinners; for, in their case, it is an eternal separation from God, and the entrance to a state of endless torments. But how small is the number of the wise who understand these truths: "the fool will not understand these things" (Ps. xci. 7), "and the number of fools is infinite" (Eccl. i. 15). The men of this world do not perceive that, if the Christian Religion be of use to

the human race, so also must be its Priesthood, for a Religion and a Priesthood are relative and inseparable ideas (as St. Chrysostom says). Such men understand not how much good the Ministers of the Altar confer upon society, when by their words they instruct the ignorant, convert sinners, comfort the afflicted, diminish the number of evil deeds (thereby averting the divine vengeance), and assist the dying; so that the Priest's words may be justly called "the fountain of wisdom . . . . . the fountain of life" (Eccl. i. 5, xxi. 16). They understand not how, by the words of the Priest, men are brought to the "laver of regeneration" (Titus iii. 5)—are "made partakers of the Holy Ghost" (Heb. vi. 4)—are refreshed with "the living Bread, which came down from heaven" (St. John vi. 51)—are reconciled to God through the remission of their sins (St. John xx. 23)—in dangerous sickness are "anointed with oil in the name of the Lord" (St. James v. 14; 1 Cor. iv. 1)—and celebrate a holy "marriage, honourable in all" (Heb. xiii. 4). They understand not that the Priest is an ambassador of God, and imparts heavenly benefits to mankind, especially when he recites the Office of the Church, or celebrates the unbloody Sacrifice of the Altar. We must therefore be prepared to endure the slanders of foolish men, and pray to God to enlighten and convert them.

2. *Now we know that Thou hast a devil.* The Jews, according to our Saviour's words, were children of the devil, and spoke according to his desire (St. John viii. 44). Like the reprobate, who are ever ungrateful for His benefits (says St. Bonaventure) they persisted in calumniating Jesus, as one possessed with the devil. Now, if the wicked treated our Great High Priest in this way, can we be surprised if they do not spare His Ministers? Let us remember His own words: "Remember My word that I said to you: the servant is not greater than his master; if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My word, they will keep yours also" (St. John xv. 20). Unbelief is not confined to heretical countries, but is rampant even in Catholic lands; for many there are who "have made shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. i. 19). These unhappy men value *not the* sacerdotal dignity; nay, they abominate even the most

exemplary Priests: "The wicked loathe them that are in the right way" (Prov. xxix. 27). Which of the Prophets have not the wicked persecuted? (St. Matt. xxiii. 29). The Apostle found himself in innumerable perils, not only from the Jews and from the Gentiles, but also "from false brethren" (2 Cor. xi. 26). To this class belong the enemies to which we are exposed; therefore we must endure their reproaches with patience: "if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it" (Ps. liv. 13).

3. *Whom dost Thou make Thyself?* If Priests proclaimed themselves to be no longer men, partaking of the weakness natural and proper to humanity,—if they called themselves angels or gods, and so professed to be impeccable,—then their enemies might well triumph in convicting them of any sin. But Priests confess themselves to be but men, although they have an angelical, nay, a Divine office (says St. Thomas). The laity, therefore, ought to feel compassion for a Priest if he falls into sin, especially considering that his detractors are often themselves the cause of his fall. But they seldom show this compassion; for "the bowels of the wicked are cruel" (Prov. xii. 10). They ought to reflect that Priests are sons of Adam, and that among the sons of Adam, whatever be their profession, there will be bad and good. Even among the Apostles there was one who betrayed his Master, and one who denied Him. How, then, can it be expected that no one should be found to go astray among the clergy of the present day? There must ever be some Priests, who (as St. Jerome says) begin by meriting praise and end by incurring God's judgment. But why do men always speak of the bad, and take so little account of the virtues of good Priests? Let us strive to belong to the latter class, and so close the mouth of our adversaries. Let us endeavour to live in such a way as to illustrate the description given by an ancient writer: "Priests are faithful leaders of the people, champions of the Faith, and enemies of false doctrine, beloved by all good men, a terror to those of an evil conscience, avengers of the oppressed, fathers of those who are regenerate in the Catholic faith, preachers of heavenly things, the advanced guard of the Christian army at the gates of the eternal city, doorkeepers entrusted with the keys of

the Kingdom of Heaven, stewards of the King's Palace." So St. Prosper. Assist my weakness, O God, in order that I may show myself a worthy Priest and thus close the mouth of all enemies.

"Let them that detract Me be clothed with shame."—*Ps.* cviii. 29.

"Lord, Thy priests are in mourning and are brought low . . . Thou knowest what they intend against us."—1 *Mach.* iii. 57.

WEDNESDAY.

HOW TO ACQUIRE CONSTANCY IN PREACHING THE TRUTH.

I. By looking for glory from God alone.

II. By striving after a more perfect knowledge of God.

III. By faithfully observing His precepts.

"Jesus answered: If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father that glorifieth Me, of Whom you say that He is your God. And you have not known Him, but I know Him, and if I shall say that I know Him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know Him, and do keep His word."—*St. John* viii. 54.

1. *It is My Father that glorifieth Me.* Let us admire our Lord's constancy in preaching the truth, and let us take Him for our model. In spite of the contumely with which His enemies treated His words, in spite of the fury with which they raged against Him, Jesus continued to teach the truth and to reveal the most profound mysteries of His Divinity. For He knew that among His hearers there were many, besides His disciples, who were willing to profit by His instructions, and that we also were one day to enjoy the benefit of them. He thus taught us (says St. Gregory) that we should add

to our diligence in preaching, rather than slacken it, in proportion as the perverseness of the wicked increases. This is the way the preacher acts who has regard only to the glory of God, and who says to himself: "There is One to Whose honour I devote myself." He who seeks God's glory is not discouraged when he has to endure calumny for justice' sake; because he seeks not the esteem of men,—has no anxious hope to obtain it,—rejoices not at having obtained it,—and grieves not for having lost it. Not for human glory, not for worldly gain, does he speak to the people of those things which tend to true glory (says St. Jerome). But, on the other hand, those who act in the contrary spirit are inconstant in their ministry; they depend on the fickle breath of popular applause, and become vile before God. Nothing is so perilous for a Priest in the eyes of God, nothing so shameful before men, as to shrink from an open expression of the truth. He who acts thus, while he pretends to be fighting for his Lord's glory, turns his back upon the enemy (says St. Gregory) and takes to flight.

2. *But I know Him.* Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, has the infinitely perfect knowledge of God: He comprehends all His designs, all His will; and therefore He says, "I know Him." The Minister of Christ, therefore, who presumes to declare the Divine Word, ought likewise to acquire a profound knowledge of God, and (as St. Gregory says) to drink first himself of the salutary water of wisdom, before imparting it to others. Let him first open the ear of his heart to his Creator's voice, and then he will be able to open his mouth profitably in the ears of the people How constant will he be in preaching who has carefully meditated on God and on His will! Almighty God enjoined Ezechiel not to fear the reproaches or threatening looks of his enemies: "Be not thou afraid of their words, neither be thou dismayed at their looks, for they are a provoking house" (ii. 6). For this purpose He bade him listen to His word and study His will, as the best means of supporting his constancy: "But thou, O son of man, hear all that I say to thee." What diligence, then, ought we to use in preparing ourselves for preaching! Ought we not to meditate continually on the mighty works of God, in order after-

wards to set them forth to the people with courage and firmness? Let us examine whether or not we take delight in such meditation.

3. *And I do keep His word.* Jesus Christ declared that He knew His Father, not only by a speculative, but by an affective knowledge,—that is, by the consent of His will to His Father's will; and therefore He added, "I keep His word." Here is a grand lesson for the preacher who would be constant in the ministry of the word. He must observe the law, because (says St. Gregory) "words have their root in acts." He ought publicly to reprove sinners: "Them that sin reprove before all" (1 Tim. v. 20); but, if his acts give the lie to his words, he will hardly be able to correct others, but will find his own faults brought up against him and his mouth closed. "Act as you speak," said St. Bernard, "and then you will not only be able to correct me, but will free yourself also from all reproach." St. Jerome also teaches us the same lesson. "Let not thy acts throw discredit on thy words, lest those who hear thee seem silently to reproach thee thus: 'Why doest thou not thyself that which thou biddest others to do?'" What a wide field for reflection have we here! What powerful motives for sanctifying ourselves! What account shall we give to Almighty God, if all our discourses have been thus useless!

"I will shew forth Thy truth with my mouth."—*Ps.* lxxxviii. 2.

"I will bring Thy knowledge, O Lord, to light, and will not pass over the truth."—From *Wisdom* vi. 24.

THURSDAY.

THE CONDUCT OF PREACHERS UNDER PERSECUTION.

I. THE PERSECUTION OF THOSE WHO PREACH THE TRUTH WAS FORETOLD.

II. GOD HAS THREATENED ALL PERSECUTORS WITH HIS JUDGMENTS.

III. A RULE IS PRESCRIBED FOR THOSE WHO SUFFER PERSECUTION.

"Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see My day; he saw it and was glad. The Jews therefore said to Him: Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple."—*St. John* viii. 56—59.

1. *They took up stones therefore to cast at Him.* If the preacher, like his Divine Master, have to suffer persecution for the truth's sake, let him not fear, nor be dismayed; for Jesus Christ foretold this, and it must surely come to pass. Our Lord frequently warned His Apostles of the persecutions to which they would be subject. He sent them "as sheep in the midst of wolves" (St. Matt. x. 16). He set before them the example of the Prophets of old, who were persecuted for their preaching: "So they persecuted the prophets that were before you" (St. Matt. v. 12). He foretold, not only that their preaching would be rejected, but that they would be persecuted "from city to city" (St. Matt. xxiii. 34). He set before them His own example, when

the Jews took up stones against Him: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (St. John xv. 20); and He explained this by saying: "They have not known the Father, nor Me" (St. John vi. 3). Nor must we suppose that the fulfilment of these predictions was confined to the first ages of the Church and does not extend to later times; for the whole history of the Church shows clearly that all who share in the ministry of the Apostles must expect to participate also in the persecutions to which they were subjected. We see the same order of things in the present day; and those who suffer should look upon themselves as honoured and favoured by God. Everywhere are to be found enemies of the light—unbelievers and wicked men, who hate the light, because it disturbs them and they would fain be let alone. Such men, if they have authority or influence, are ready to persecute any Priest or preacher of the truth who comes to enlighten them: for, "every one that doth evil hateth the light" (St. John iii. 20). Everywhere are there enemies of the Cross of Christ; and it is not probable (says St. Cyril) that they will receive His ministers well or desire their blessing.

2. *But Jesus hid Himself.* Our Saviour saw that the Jews in their fury would have recourse to stones; which stones (says St. Augustine) resembled their own hard hearts. But what chastisement did He inflict on His persecutors for so heinous a crime? As man, He fled from the stones; but woe to those from whose stony hearts God has fled (adds St. Augustine). This indeed is the punishment due to all who oppose the preaching of the Divine Word, as shewn by our Saviour's conduct. As St. Gregory says, our Lord, by hiding Himself from the Jews, signified that the truth itself will be hidden from those who despise His word. Almighty God, knowing their perversity, will leave them buried in their own darkness: "He knoweth their works, and therefore He shall bring night on them, and they shall be destroyed" (Job xxxiv. 25). He threatened this chastisement in still clearer terms, when He spoke to the Apostles of those who would not receive them or listen to their words: "Amen, I say to you, *it shall* be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha

in the day of judgment, than for that city" (St. Matt. x. 15); and St. Jerome states the reason,—viz., that no preacher had been sent to Sodom and Gomorrha, whereas in the other case the preacher sent by God had been driven away. Let us compassionate such blindness and its terrible punishment; but let us not be disturbed by the ill-treatment to which Priests are subjected; since we know that they will have abundant reward in heaven.

3. *And went out of the temple.* Our Saviour confirmed by His example the rule which He gave to His Apostles, and through them to all Preachers; for, whereas He could have manifested His power and overwhelmed His enemies, He chose rather to show His meekness and humility. He thereby taught us (says St. Gregory) to turn away the anger of the proud by our humility. This, then, is the rule which we are to follow: "Going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet" (St. Matt. x. 15). Now St. Paul and St. Barnabas fulfilled this precept of their Divine Master literally, when they were driven out of the city of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 51). Moreover, our Saviour also enjoined His Apostles to flee from one city to another, promising them that they should not "finish all the cities of Israel till the Son of Man come" (St. Matt. x. 23). Let, then, the servants of Christ (says St. Augustine) do what their Lord has commanded, or at least permitted; let them flee from city to city. If we ever find ourselves in such circumstances, we should do well to study the maxims laid down by St. Athanasius, in his "*Apologia de Fugâ*," and let us pray to God of His goodness to bestow prudence, strength, meekness, and a happy issue to their labours and trials, on all those who preach His word either among Infidels or wicked Catholics.

"Save Thy servant, O God, that trusts in Thee."—From *Ps.* vi. 7.

"O Lord, remember me, and visit me, and defend me from them that persecute me."—*Jeremias* xv. 15.

FRIDAY.

MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

I. She co-operated with Her Son's Priesthood.
II. She fulfilled a Priestly office.
III. She instructed all Priests.

"There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother."—*St. John* xix. 25.

1. *The Mother of Jesus stood by His Cross*, to co-operate with the Great High Priest, Who was then consummating His Sacrifice. The first Adam entered into the world, as a priest into his temple, to give continual honour to God; but the priesthood of our first parent was interrupted and destroyed through Eve, who ought rather to have co-operated with it. Hence the second Adam, to repair so great an evil, would have the second Eve near Him, to co-operate with Him in the great Sacrifice which He offered for the human race. St. Bernardine of Sienna calls Mary "the co-operatrix of our salvation . . the co-operatrix of our redemption." It is true that the Priesthood was centred in Christ, and was consummated in Him; yet was it to be supplemented by something more, as was His Passion, though in itself absolutely complete and perfect. Thus the Apostle uses this expression: "I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His Body, which is the Church" (Col. i. 24). In other words, the Priesthood of Christ required also the priesthood of *His mystical* members co-operating with Him; for they were *constituted* by Him "a holy priesthood . . . a kingly priesthood"

(1 Pet. ii. 5, 9). Now this priesthood pertained especially to Mary, who was, as it were, the "neck" of His mystical Body—that is to say, nearest to the Head, and the channel of the graces and blessings which flow from It to the other members of the Body (Cant. i. 10; iv. 4). Again, at the foot of the Cross, Mary represented the whole Body of the Church; She was the Church of God at the time of the Passion (says St. Antoninus); then She offered "spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. ii. 5)—"the sacrifice of praise" (Ps. cxv. 7)—"the sacrifice of an afflicted spirit" (Ps. l. 19)—"the holocaust of obedience to God" (Numb. xxviii. 6)—and the "evening sacrifice" of Her Son (Ps. cxl. 2). Let us unite ourselves with Her as often as we celebrate Holy Mass; for we also are co-operators in this august Sacrifice. Let us beg Her to unite us in spirit with the great Victim, as we are united in ministry with the great High Priest.

2. *Mary stood by the Cross*, and exercised two great functions of Priesthood—the first over the Real Body, the second over the Mystical Body, of Jesus Christ. She had singular power over His Real Body, because She was His Mother; so that the Flesh of Christ was the flesh of Mary, the Blood of Christ was the blood of Mary; Her spirit was united to Christ's Spirit, so that in Her, more than in any other, was fulfilled the inspired saying, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). Thus was Mary associated with the great High Priest in the functions of His Priesthood, when He "offered Himself unspotted unto God, for a sacrifice and odour of sweetness" (Heb. ix. 14). The power over His Mystical Body was that of bringing forth children to God; and therefore Her Son Himself gave Her "the beloved disciple" to be Her son,—and, in his person, all the beloved disciples of Jesus, all the souls of the elect, that She might bring them forth to the life of grace and to eternal glory: for (as St. Bernardine of Sienna says) all who are sons of grace are sons of the Virgin. But, whereas She brought forth Her first-born Son without pain, Her other sons She brought forth in anguish unutterable and overwhelming; as it is said of Her: "Great as the sea is thy destruction, who shall heal thee?" (Lam. ii. 13). St. Bonaventure said well, that the pain which Mary escaped in childbirth She endured at the time of the

Passion; for She saw Her Son expire in the midst of torments and revilings—that Son, Whom She had conceived without the operation of man,—that Son Who was Her Redeemer and Her God. To gaze on this awful sight was surely a more bitter suffering than any pain which She could have felt in Her own body; for She loved Him for Whom She sorrowed more than Her own self. Oh, cruel martyrdom endured by Mary at the Cross in fulfilment of Her Priesthood! We, too, as Priests, in respect both of the Real and of the Mystical Body of Christ, must be well assured that we cannot exercise this our office without martyrdom. Let us be ashamed, then, if we are downcast by any adversity, or pain, or reproaches.

3. *Mary stood by the Cross*, and showed Herself to be indeed the Mistress of Priests, the Mistress of the Doctors of the Church (as St. Antoninus calls Her). She then taught them with what faith, attention, and fervour, they should offer the Sacrifice of the Altar, which is identical with that of the Cross, and in which is comprised the value of all the sacrifices of the Old Law. She taught them how to assist the dying; for She did not abandon Her Son till He was dead and laid in the Sepulchre; and thus it is for Priests to assist the brethren of the First-born in the last moments of their life, invoking Her, whom St. Antoninus calls the "death of death." She taught them also how to bring forth spiritual children to Jesus Christ—that is, how to excite in men a horror of sin, a fear of God's justice, confidence in His mercy, and a desire to profit by all the lessons which Jesus Christ gave from His Cross. How great horror must Mary have conceived for sin, when, on Calvary, She could say more truly than Jacob, "An evil beast hath devoured my son" (Gen. xxxvii. 20)! What an idea did She conceive of God's justice and mercy, when She saw how the Eternal Father "spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Rom. viii. 32)! How well did She understand the teaching of Jesus Christ from the Cross! for the wood, to which His dying limbs were nailed, was also (says St. Augustine) the Chair of the Teacher. Let us pray to Her to obtain for us grace so to know Jesus crucified that we may bear Him in our *own hearts* and preach Him to the Faithful; let us ask this grace

with all earnestness when we celebrate holy Mass in the solemnity of this day.

"Most sorrowful Virgin, instruct the princes of the Church as thyself, and teach the ancients wisdom."—From *Ps.* civ. 22.

"Thou hast prevented our ruin in the presence of our God."—*Judith* xiii. 25.

SATURDAY.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM, A LESSON TO PRIESTS AS TO THEIR CONDUCT WHEN THEY ARE HONOURED.

I. To reflect on the fickleness of the populace.
II. Not to disdain humiliation for the glory of God.
III. To show moderation and meekness.

. . . "Took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried: Hosanna, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord, the King of Israel. And Jesus found a young ass, and sat upon it."—*St. John* xii. 13, 14.

1. *Took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet Him.* Jesus Christ knew that His Apostles would receive some honour in converting the world; and therefore (as St. Chrysostom points out) He was pleased to fortify them beforehand by His example and instructions, so that they might not be led away by vainglory, nor look for popular applause. He therefore sets before their eyes the Jewish people, receiving Him with acclamations, yet a few days after madly demanding His crucifixion. Jerusalem resounded with canticles of praise from the lips of the multitudes

that went before and that followed our Saviour; yet in a few days these praises were to be succeeded by blasphemies, insults, and cries of fury. Truly, "cursed is the man that trusts in man, and maketh flesh his arm" (Jer. xvii. 5). To-day the populace praise thee, and to-morrow despise thee! He, therefore, who has any knowledge of human nature and of popular sentiment, will set no value on such acclamations, except so far as they may tend to promote the glory of God. Let us reflect further, that the fickleness of the Jewish populace, issuing in the Crucifixion of the Messias, was the work of wicked Priests, seducing them and drawing down upon them God's curse and final dispersion: "My people hath been a lost flock, their shepherds have caused them to go astray" (Jer. l. 6). The Apostles, indeed, did not at the time understand these lessons taught by their Master in His triumphal entry to Jerusalem; but afterwards, when they had been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they both perceived these truths themselves and also taught the Priests of all future ages not to seek glory from men. Hence the Prince of the Apostles wrote: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass is withered, and the flower thereof is fallen away" (1 Pet. i. 24).

2. *And Jesus found a young ass.* Jesus had sent two of His disciples to bring an ass and a colt; and they had executed His command. They found these animals tied before the gate without, in the meeting of two ways; they loosed them, and, when asked by the bystanders their reason for doing so, they replied that it was the Lord's command, Who had need of them (St. Matt. xxi. 1; St. Mark xi. 1; St. Luke xix. 29). These disciples were Peter and Philip (as St. Hilary and Venerable Bede teach), or (according to the opinion of Cornelius à Lapide) they were Peter and John—leaders of the Apostolic company; yet they refused not to perform an action which they might have thought humiliating or even perilous in its consequences. It sufficed to know that it was their Master's will, and that they were assisting towards His triumph. St. Ambrose says that this action represented the office which they were afterwards to discharge, of loosing from the chains of sin so many of the Jewish nation (typified by the

ass) and of the Gentile world (of which the colt was the figure), and leading them to Jesus, to secure His final triumph. Priests therefore may be taught this lesson—not to disdain actions which may seem to the world humiliating, so long as they are done for God, but to perform them with zeal and affection, being persuaded that nothing is contemptible which tends to promote God's glory, and by which we may merit the kingdom of heaven. So St. Basil. Have we this conviction? Are we certain that the very least act of divine worship, which we promote, is of greater worth than all the mighty deeds of Alexander and Cæsar, because such an act increases God's glory, whereas the prowess of the latter procured glory only for man?

3. *And sat upon it.* What a spectacle did our Saviour present before God and man! Verily, He is "meek and humble of heart!" No swords, nor gold, nor purple—no string of prisoners loaded with chains—graced His triumph; no pomp, nor pride, nor riches accompanied it. He came in meekness,—not terrible in power, but gentle in meekness; and St. Matthew points out that He thus fulfilled the prophecies of Isaias (lxii. 11) and of Zacharias (xi. 11). "Behold thy King cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of her that is used to the yoke" (St. Matt. xxi. 5). Let us lay to heart this great lesson—that moderation, humility, and meekness are the safest ornaments of Priests, and that they are often in danger in the midst of honours heaped on them by the faithful. In the height of honour let your humility be the deeper (says St. Augustine), for the truest praise of honour is the virtue of humility. If, because of our dignity, we are seated in high places, let us humble ourselves in spirit (says St. Bernard), remembering our nothingness, our sins, and the punishment which we have deserved.

"Man when he was in honour did not understand."—*Ps.* xlviii. 13.

"To Thee, O Lord our God, belongeth justice, but to us confusion of our face."—From *Baruch* i. 15.

PALM SUNDAY.

IN THE PASSION THE GLORY OF THE PRIESTS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT WAS OBSCURED BY THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

I. THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE SONS OF AARON WAS OBSCURED.

II. THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE APOSTLES WAS ECLIPSED.

III. THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST ALONE SHONE FORTH.

"For it is written: I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed; but after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."—*St. Matt.* xxvi. 31, 32.

1. *For it is written: I will strike the Shepherd.* The sons of Aaron—unfaithful husbandmen of the Mystical Vineyard—after having ill-treated the servants sent by their Lord (that is, the Prophets), had no reverence for His Son, Whom He had sent to be the "Shepherd" of the whole human race (St. Matt. xxi. 33). They "struck" Him with their sacrilegious tongues; that is, they condemned Him to a most cruel and shameful death. At night, according to the words of prophecy, they met together with the princes of the earth, and took counsel "against the Lord and against His Christ" (Ps. ii. 2), and "all said: He is guilty of death" (St. Matt. xxvi. 66). In the morning was shown the solicitude of the Priests towards evil (says St. Jerome); for, being then assembled together, they perpetrated their awful crime; they circumvented *the Just,* condemned innocent blood, and delivered to death the

Author of life (St. Matt. xxvii. 1). This day, however, proved the day of their doom, and the eternal obscuration of all their glory. As St. Leo says, it took away their Law and their Prophets, their Kingdom and their Priesthood, and turned all their feasts into mourning. Caiaphas, who a few days before had prophesied as High Priest, now forgot the prohibition of Almighty God, that "the high priest . . . shall not uncover his head, he shall not rend his garments" (Levit. xxi. 10); for, maddened with rage and hatred, he "rent his garments;" and this rending of his garments,—like the rending of the veil of the temple, which came to pass shortly after,—signified (says St. Jerome) that the glory of the Priesthood was lost, and the chair of the High Priests for ever empty. Yet he knew not what he was doing, nor the honour which he was forfeiting for all eternity. How is the Priesthood of Aaron now obscured! How has that dignity now vanished away, which, being but a mere figure, was destined to give place to the reality, as shadows flee before the light! But let us reflect how these miserable Priests brought this to pass by their own acts. They resisted the divine calls, they closed their eyes against the light, they fortified themselves in their iniquity, and "filled up the measure of their fathers." How many Priests, even in these days, in a like manner cause themselves to be forsaken by God through their impenitence! Have pity, O God, on them and on me!

2. *And the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed.* Only a few hours before, the Apostles had been consecrated Priests of the New Testament; and now their Divine Master, in the words of Zacharias, foretells their approaching "dispersion," which truly came to pass at the time of His capture; for, "then the disciples, all leaving Him, fled" (St. Matt. xxvi. 56). He had likewise foretold that they should be scandalised in Him that night; and they did, in fact, fall into so great consternation and amazement, that they no longer knew what to think of Christ or of His Kingdom or promises. They slept, while He suffered His Agony in the garden, and were justly reproved by Him (St. Matt. xxvi. 40); they wandered about during the time of His Passion, and only beheld the death of their Master at a distance (St. Luke xxiii. 49). In fulfilment of the words of the Psalm (xxxvii. 12), one of His

disciples, the son of perdition, though a Prince in the Kingdom of God, became the leader of those who took his Master captive, and betrayed Him with a treacherous kiss: "He was the leader of those who apprehended Jesus," though he had been "numbered among the Apostles and had obtained part of their ministry" (Acts i. 17). For a wretched gain he sold the Incarnate Son of God. "He possessed a field as the reward of iniquity, and, being hanged, burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" (Acts i. 18). Even the chief of the Apostolic college fell miserably on that day; for he rashly cut off the ear of Malchus without his Master's order, thus exasperating the soldiers still more against Jesus,—afterwards, with like rashness, he placed himself in the midst of his Lord's enemies, and there he denied Him and perjured himself at the voice of a servant-maid. Behold, exclaims St. Augustine, how that most firm pillar of the spiritual temple was shaken to its very foundations at one single breath of wind! Let us, then, enter into ourselves, and, mindful of so many lamentable falls, let us be diffident in regard to our own strength and our own resolutions. Neither the Sacerdotal character, nor the power of our own unaided will, suffices to save us (as St. Chrysostom says) without the assistance of supernatural grace, in which we must repose all our confidence.

3. *But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.* As the stars hide themselves at the appearance of the sun, so, on that day in which the Priesthood of the Supreme Pastor was to shine forth, the priests both of the Old and New Covenant disappeared, and all the mouths, which otherwise had magnified the glory of God, were silenced: "Let all the earth keep silence before Him" (Habacuc ii. 20). That was the day in which He was to offer the great Sacrifice, with strong crying and tears; for Him was it reserved to reconcile us fully with God, to obtain complete victory over all enemies, and the full redemption of the human race; and therefore would He be alone in treading the wine-press: "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with Me" (Isaias lxiii. 3). He fulfilled all Sacerdotal duties, for He "hid not justice, and declared salvation" (Ps. xxxix. 11); He suffered "the bitterest

torments for the truth" (Ps. cxix. 7); He suffered intense affliction for man's evils, and "the torrents of iniquity troubled Him" (Ps. xvii. 5); He prayed for men, and His prayer was accompanied by the offering of His life. Thus did He hasten the long expected season of the good pleasure of God (Ps. lxviii. 14). Let us adore this great High Priest; let us cast ourselves at His feet; let us thank Him for having associated us with Him in His Priesthood; let us implore Him to bless us, even as Melchisedech blessed Abraham.

"Thou art a Priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech."—*Ps.* cix. 4.

"O High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, have mercy on Thy priests."—From *Heb.* vii. 26.

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD IN THE INWARD SUFFERINGS OF HIS PASSION.

I. The Priest.
II. The Victim.
III. The Altar.

"And there appeared unto Him an Angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground."—*St. Luke* xxii. 43, 44.

1. *Being in an agony.* Our great High Priest had offered Himself mystically, when He instituted the Holy Eucharist, with perfect calmness; but now, on a sudden, He was seized with the most agonising sorrow; fear, heaviness, and sadness came upon Him at once: "He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad" (St.

Matt. xxvi. 37). "He began to fear and to be heavy" (St. Mark xiv. 33). By this sudden change He showed (as St. John Damascene points out) that He afflicted His soul by His own free will, and that His Sacrifice was voluntarily offered. At that moment, He had before His eyes the sins of all mankind, which He had taken upon Himself; all, even in their most minute circumstances, were vividly impressed upon His mind: He realised all the torments of His approaching Passion, all the outrages with which His sacred Person was to be dishonoured: He passed in review all the sorrows of the human race, and especially the sorrows of His Mystical Body, the Church;—regarding as His own the torments of martyrs, the anguish of Confessors, the anxieties of Pastors, the conflicts of all His members against the world, the flesh, and the devil: He saw clearly the ingratitude of sinners in rendering His work of Redemption of no avail for such vast numbers of the human race, causing His blood to be shed in vain for them, and thereby increasing to an infinite extent their guilt. Deep, too, was the impression upon His heart of the sorrows of His Mother, who was to behold His agony, and whom He loved so far above all creatures. And all this mental sorrow He endured so fully that it exceeded all the other sufferings of His Passion. For now it was the hand of God which was heavy upon the Victim, as expressed by holy Job: "He hath rushed in upon me like a giant" (Job xvi. 15); whereas in the Prætorium, and on Golgotha, His enemies, fierce and furious as they were, were still, in comparison, only as children shooting their arrows at Him: "the arrows of children are their wounds" (Ps. lxiii. 8). This was the pure Sacrifice, which He offered to His Father out of pure love; for the rest of His Passion was at the same time a Sacrifice and a crime: it was a Sacrifice on Christ's part, a crime on the part of His murderers. By this agony Christ would expiate those sins of thought, which are so innumerable; thought being, indeed, the *form*, and (as it were) the *soul*, of sin; for in it consists the offence against the Divine Majesty. Hence the intensity of His agony; so that He could say: "The hand of My scourger is more *grievous* than My mourning" (Job xxiii. 2).

2. *And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground.* It is impossible for the human mind fully to realise this intensity of the mental sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we may in some degree be able to meditate upon them, as described in Holy Scripture or by the Fathers of the Church. Let us consider to what a state of anguish and humiliation the Victim was reduced, whilst, at the same time, the higher faculties of His soul enjoyed the intuitive vision of God. A sweat of blood, not only soaking His garments, but running in streams to bathe the ground, showed the violence of His bitter agony: nor was there exaggeration in those words of Jesus, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (St. Matt. xxvi. 38); for they do but represent the multitude of sorrows with which His Soul was filled; they shew that it was only by a miracle of His Divinity that His life was preserved, in order that He might suffer the death of the Cross; they remind us of the clear fulfilment of the prophecy: "My soul is filled with evils, and My life hath drawn nigh to hell" (Ps. lxxxvii. 4). The Angel, who descends from heaven to strengthen Him, shews us that, as in the weakness of His assumed humanity He was made "a little lower than the angels," so He humbled Himself even to receive comfort from one of these heavenly spirits. And, when he asked for the company of His three chosen disciples, when He returned to wake them, when He called upon them to watch in prayer,—in all these cases the same extremity of humiliation is manifest. Let us meditate on our Lord's agony; let us thank Him for having suffered so much for us; let us love Him so much the more, in that He has subjected Himself to our miseries. Let us remember that He took upon Himself our weakness, in order to communicate to us His strength, and, if our Heavenly Father calls us sometimes to partake of His Son's chalice of suffering, let us not murmur nor refuse to drink it. The Physician has Himself drunk first, that the sick man might not refuse the medicine (St. Augustine).

3. *He prayed the longer.* It is true to say that Jesus Christ was Himself the Altar of His own Sacrifice, He being in Himself the means by which this Sacrifice was offered. On Calvary He had also the "Altar of the Cross," on which His Sacrifice was com-

pleted; but in the garden there was but one Altar, whence ascended "the sweet odour" of sacrifice, which was "like incense,"—a prayer worthy of God,—a prayer which He offered as He lay prostrate upon the ground,—a prayer thrice repeated,—a prayer accompanied by horrible anguish,—a prayer which, nevertheless, was not granted at the time: "Yea, and when I cry, and entreat, He hath shut out my prayer" (Lam. iii. 8). Let us meditate on this great prayer, by which Jesus prepared Himself for His approaching temptation and taught us to make preparation for ours: "Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me; but yet, not My will, but Thine, be done" (St. Luke xxii. 42). Let us consider that our Lord Jesus Christ shewed Himself full of fear before His temptation, when He offered this prayer; but afterwards, in His trial, He shewed Himself full of courage and firmness. We, on the contrary, are full of courage in prayer, and of discouragement in temptation (as St. Bernard remarks). Let us often repeat this prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has been the instruction and the salvation of the whole Church; for (as St. Leo says) this voice of the Head is the salvation of the whole Body. This voice has instructed all the Faithful, has influenced all confessors, has crowned all martyrs.

"O great High Priest, who waitedst for Him that should save Thee from pusillanimity of spirit, and a storm, let Thy mercies speedily prevent us."—From *Ps.* liv. 9; and lxxviii. 8.

"Not My will, but Thine, be done."—*St. Luke* xxii. 42.

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

CHRIST, AS PRIEST, IN THE MOCKERY WHICH HE ENDURED.

I. HE DESPISES THE WORLD.
II. HE DISREGARDS THE MOCKERY ITSELF.
III. BUT HE TREATS NO MAN WITH CONTEMPT.

"And blaspheming, many other things they said against Him."—*St. Luke* xii. 65. "But He answered him nothing. . . . And Herod with his army set Him at nought, and mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment."—*St. Luke* xxiii. 9—11. "And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required."—*Ibid.* 24.

1. *Blaspheming, many other things they said against Him.* The Son of God came upon earth for the salvation of the world—"that the world might be saved by Him" (St. John iii. 17); and He would save the world by overcoming it: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world" (St. John xvi. 33). But, in order to save the world and to overcome the world, He despised the world and the Prince of this world—that is to say, him who is so called because of his perversity (says St. Augustine). Therefore (says St. Thomas) He suffered all manner of outrages, not only against His honour, but against His fame. The world treated Him with insults, calling Him a blasphemer, a malefactor, a deceiver, a seducer of the people, as forbidding them to pay the tribute due to Cæsar. He was mocked by the Priests, by the chief men of His nation, by the populace, by the soldiers; He was captured and bound like a notorious malefactor; He was condemned by two councils, and

afterwards by the Roman Governor; He was derided by Herod, and clothed in a robe of ignominy, crowned as a mock king, spit upon, insulted, scourged as the vilest slave, and finally crucified between two thieves. Justly did St. Bernard express equal admiration for His patience and for His humility—patience in actual endurance, humility in the manner of suffering. Hence the Apostle extols the dispensation of the Almighty in "making foolish the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor. i. 20); hence He was content to be rejected by the world. "We are made as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all" (1 Cor. iv. 13); and He said this in the name of all the Apostles, nay, in the name of the whole body of clergy, to whom it belongs to preach contempt of the world and to set an example of it in practice. If thou wouldst preach contempt of the world (says St. Bernard), first despise it thyself, and then canst thou effectually invite others to do the like.

2. *Mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment.* The Apostle teaches us that Jesus despised the contempt of the world: "Who having joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii. 2); and He did this in order to leave an example to us, His Priests, that we should do likewise. Dost thou suffer reproach and outrages? Look to thy Lord, Who declares of Himself: "The confusion of My face hath covered Me" (Ps. xliii. 16). Does it seem intolerable to thee that thy dignity should be despised? Thou hast not so great dignity as Christ, nor canst thou be so jealous of thine as He was of His, when He said by the mouth of His prophet: "Where is my honour?" (Mal. i. 6). Do thy wrongs seem too atrocious? Yet thou canst scarcely say with Jesus: "I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people" (Ps. xxi. 7). Does it displease thee that in the outrages thou sufferest God Himself is outraged? Suffer it peaceably, as Jesus suffered it, saying to His Father: "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me" (Ps. lxviii. 10). Finally, if thy self-love excite in thee any resentment whatsoever, remember Him "Who endured such opposition from sinners against Himself" (Heb. xii. 3); remember Him Who, "as a lamb before his shearer, opened not *His* mouth," and Who "gave His cheeks to them that plucked

them . . . Who turned not away His face from them who spit upon it" (Isaias l. 6; liii. 7).

3. *Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.* Although Jesus Christ despised the contempt of the world, He despised none of His enemies, but died in order to save them from eternal death. He was "the Saviour of the world" (St. John iv. 42), "the Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. iv. 10). He thought not of those who put Him to death as of His murderers, but as of those for whom He died (says St. Augustine). What did He not do in order to enlighten the Priests and the Princes of His nation? He told them the truth; He gave them light to distinguish the times of His coming upon earth,—first in the humility of the flesh, the second time in the majesty of glory,—showing them moreover the chastisement which, in slaying Him, they would bring down upon themselves (St. Matt. xxvi. 64). What did He not do to enlighten Pilate, that he might recognise the guilt of the sin which he was committing (St. John xix. 11)? On the Cross He prayed for His murderers (St. Luke xxii. 34), so that (as St. Cyprian says) the pity and tenderness of Christ triumphed over the malice and wickedness of the Jews. If, then, the sacerdotal character obliges us to seek the salvation of all men, if we are also called (as St. Jerome says) "saviours of the world," let us not despise any of our brethren for whom Christ died: "Despise him not when thou art in thy strength" (Eccli. iii. 15): though he be thy enemy, and mock thee, and oppose thee, yet is he thy brother: "Why dost thou despise thy brother?" (Rom. xiv. 10).

"O great High Priest, who for Thy Father's sake hast borne reproach, be mindful of the reproach of Thy servants."—From *Ps.* lxviii. 8; lxxxviii. 51.

"O great High Priest, filled with reproaches, behold our reproach."—From *Lam.* iii. 30; v. 1.

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST IN HIS SUFFERINGS.

I. He was the Priest of sorrows.
II. He was the Priest of the most bitter sorrow.
III. He was the Priest of all sorrow.

"Pilate . . . delivered up Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified."—*St. Mark* xv. 15.

1. *Pilate delivered up Jesus.* In delivering up Jesus to His executioners, Pilate executed the decree of the Eternal Father. For in that He bore the title of our Saviour, He must be "delivered up for us all" (Rom. viii. 32). It was the will of the Father to render His only-begotten Son the Priest of sorrow, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity" (Isa. liii. 3), in order that He might be "a high priest who could have compassion on our infirmities" (Heb. iv. 15). To this great High Priest it appertained to reconcile us to God, and to appease His anger; and from Him has every zealous priest learnt to do penance, in order to obtain mercy for sinners: "In the time of wrath He was made a reconciliation" (Eccli. xliv. 17). To Him it appertained to shew the love of God for man, and so to incite man to the love of God. Nor could this be done better than by the Redeemer's Passion: "God commendeth his charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8, 9). To Him it appertained to give mankind an example of obedience, humility, constancy, *justice,* and of all other virtues. Nor could He do this better than

by His Passion: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps" (1 Pet. ii. 21). To Him it appertained to make known to man his dignity, in order that he might no more be a slave to sin, but rather look upon it with horror. Nor could He do this better than by His Passion: "You are bought with a great price; glorify and bear God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 20). Let us meditate on these deep counsels of our Master, and, in proportion as we have a larger share in His Priesthood, let us endeavour also to have a larger share in those sufferings which are both the ornament and the emblem of the Priesthood.

2. *After he had scourged Him.* The victim in a sacrifice is a substitute for the person who has sinned, and endures the sufferings due to the latter. Christ is here the Victim—man, the guilty sinner: and therefore our Lord, by the mouth of the Psalmist, declared: "I am ready for scourges" (Ps. xxxvii. 8), in order that man, reconciled to God, might no longer suffer the scourges of God's wrath; as it is written: "The scourge shall not come near thy dwelling" (Ps. xc. 10). But He invites us to consider the bitterness of His torments: "Attend and see, if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow" (Lam. i. 12). My sorrow, says He, is greater than all sorrows; I am tormented both in body and soul: "My sorrow is above sorrow, My heart mourneth within Me" (Jer. viii. 18). The pains which He suffered were indeed most cruel; for the sensibility of His Soul, as well as the tenderness of His Body, was incomparably superior to that of all other men. Moreover, He chose to take upon Himself (says St. Thomas) an amount of sufferings proportionate in extent to the abundance of the fruit which was to result from them, namely, the deliverance of the whole human race. For these reasons was His sorrow greater than all sorrows. But what of us, who are His Priests? How far have we imitated Him in His sufferings? Shall we henceforth shrink from suffering and penance? Shall we forget His bitter torments, even when we are offering them to the Eternal Father in holy Mass? Shall we fail in the duty of preaching these sufferings to the Faithful and leading them on to participate in the fruits of this plentiful Redemption?

3. *To be crucified.* It appertained to our great High Priest to teach us that we must not fear the evils of this present life, if we would escape those of eternity. As St. Augustine says, it is the proof of a good life not to fear those things which ought not to cause fear. Our Lord endured all kinds of human suffering (as St. Thomas declares) "*in genere*," but not "*in specie.*" Thus, He suffered at the hands of all classes of men,—Jews and Gentiles, Priests and laymen, Princes and servants, common people and soldiers, friends and enemies. He suffered—in His reputation by calumny; in His honour by derision and contumely; in His goods by the stripping off of His garments: He suffered—in His Soul by sadness, heaviness, and fear; in His Body by wounds and scourges. He suffered in all the members of His Body; in His Head by thorns, in His Hands and Feet by nails, in His Face by blows and spitting, in every part of His Body by scourges. He suffered in all the senses of His Body; for His touch was tormented by innumerable pains; His taste by vinegar and gall; His smell by the stench of His prison, and of the corpses on Calvary; His hearing by blasphemies and wailings; His sight by the insults of His enemies, and by the tears of His Mother and of His beloved disciple. In our own sicknesses, therefore, let us call to mind the Passion of Jesus; and, when we visit the sick and assist the dying, let us not fail to set before their eyes the image of their suffering Redeemer, so as to perfect their patience and resignation to the Divine will. In these holy days, especially, may meditation on the sorrows of our Lord kindle in our hearts an ardent sorrow for those sins which caused them.

"O great High Priest, Who hast found trouble and sorrow, look upon us who are afflicted through the trouble of evils and sorrow."—From *Ps.* cxiv. 3; cvi. 39.

"O great High Priest, tempted in all things, let him be anathema who loves Thee not."—From *Heb.* iv. 15; 1 *Cor.* xvi. 22.

MAUNDY THURSDAY.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST IN HIS JOURNEY TO CALVARY.

I. JESUS BEARS HIS CROSS.
II. HE IS ASSISTED IN SUPPORTING ITS WEIGHT.
III. HE PREACHES WHILST CARRYING HIS CROSS.

"And as they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and they laid the Cross on him to carry after Jesus. And there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning to them said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." —*St. Luke* xxiii. 26—28.

1. *And as they led Him away.* Jesus was led away to death, "bearing his own Cross" (St. John xix. 17): the High Priest of the good things to come carries the Altar, for the completion of His sacrifice: the Divine Victim is laden, like Isaac, with the wood on which He is to be immolated. The long heavy Cross is placed upon His bruised and torn shoulders; and He, weary from the loss of blood, and from all the torments He has endured, sinks under the heavy load; thus shewing His utter weakness. He took it upon His shoulders, as the principality given Him by His Father in token of His love: "The government is upon His shoulder" (Isa. ix. 6). He carried it, as conquerors carry their trophies, as a sign of His victory (says St. Chrysostom). Pause at this grand spectacle, O Priest; look upon it with eyes of pity, and thou wilt find in it a great mystery; for, if thou lookest on it with unholy eyes (says St. Augustine), thou wilt only find in

it a subject of scorn. The great High Priest carries the Cross, in order to teach thee to carry it; He complains not of His Cross, in order that thou mayst not complain of thine; He sinks under the weight of His Cross, He assumes thy weakness, in order to communicate to thee His strength. Call to mind thy Saviour bearing His Cross, when, in the miseries of this present life, thou partakest of His sufferings; and again when thou holdest the sacred chalice at the Altar, renewing the Sacrifice of Calvary.

2. *They laid the Cross on him to carry after Jesus.* Simon of Cyrene, whom the soldiers compelled to carry the Cross, is a figure of Christians, to whom it is reserved to "conform themselves to the image of the only-begotten Son of God," in taking up and bearing the Cross. As St. Hilary says, this was the only punishment which Jesus would not suffer alone, and in this He deigned to receive help; for He suffered for us, not to exempt us from suffering, but to render our sufferings meritorious and profitable, through union with His sufferings. He did then what Priests also are bound to do—that is, to confirm, both by word and example, the precept which He has given us, to bear our own cross, and to follow Him: "Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple" (St. Luke xiv. 27). Let us strive to impress this salutary lesson on our people in the confessional and in the pulpit; let us make them understand that it is not only necessary, but also most profitable for them, to bear their own cross after Jesus, and with Jesus ever before their eyes: for so will they "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ" (Col. i. 24), and will glory in nothing "save in the Cross" (Gal. vi. 14).

3. *Weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves.* Behold how Jesus preaches, whilst He pursues His painful journey. He teaches Priests not to seek for compassion in their afflictions, lest they diminish the merit of them, and in order to give an example of patience to their people; so that they may be able to say: "We glory also in tribulations" (Rom. v. 3). He teaches Priests how they should preach the Passion: that is to say, that they should *not labour* merely to excite tears of compassion for the sufferings

of Christ: for He saith, "Weep not over Me:" He suffers out of love, and in suffering satisfies His most ardent desire: there is no need to weep over Him (says Theophylact) Who suffers of His own accord. Rather should we weep for ourselves; that is, we should excite ourselves to contrition for our sins. Jesus (says St. Bonaventure) desires not that we should altogether keep from weeping; but He would have us make sin the object of our tears. For in very truth our sins were the cause of His Passion: "He was delivered up for our sins" (Rom. iv. 25); our sins renew His Passion: "crucifying again to themselves the Son of God" (Heb. vi. 6); our sins render His Passion of no avail to many: "the brother . . shall perish for whom Christ died" (1 Cor. viii. 11). That great preacher, St. Antoninus, found that, when his hearers shed bitter tears of tenderness at the description of Christ's sufferings, they soon returned to their disorderly life after leaving the Church, but that when they wept for their sins, which had so cruelly tormented their Divine Lord, they fell not into them again so easily. The maxim of Venerable Bede is well worthy of a Priest's consideration, viz., "that nothing will so powerfully restrain the wicked and profligate man from sin, as the remembrance that Christ suffered because of it." Have we hitherto profited by this teaching? What profit have others derived from our preaching? Let us on this great day be touched with compunction, let us make some good resolutions, and, in this time of mercy, let us implore grace to put them in execution.

"O great High Priest, my iniquities, as a heavy burden, are become heavy upon Thee."—From *Ps.* xxxvii. 10.

"O great High Priest, bruised in infirmity, if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?"—From *Isa.* liii. 10; *St. Luke* xxiii. 31.

GOOD FRIDAY.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS, WHEN THE VICTIM WAS SACRIFICED.

I. THE ORDER OF ITS FULFILMENT.
II. THE MODE OF ITS FULFILMENT.
III. ITS FINAL ACCOMPLISHMENT.

"He said: It is consummated: and bowing His head, He gave up the ghost."—*St. John* xix. 30.

1. *He said: It is consummated.* St. Thomas says, that Jesus Christ hung upon the Cross between heaven and earth, in order to shew His quality of Priest and Mediator between God and man; and St. Augustine says that He then completed that Sacrifice of reconciliation, in which He was one with God, to Whom it was offered,—one with men, for whom it was offered,—and Himself at once both the offerer and the offered. He Himself announced that "all was consummated," for it became Him alone, to Whom were present both past and future, to declare it. All the prophecies, all the figures contained in the sacred Scriptures, were "consummated," as He had already promised: "all things shall be accomplished which were written" (St. Luke xviii. 31); and abundant price had been offered, efficacious means had been merited, to "consummate" all transgression, and to put an end to every sin: "that transgression may be finished, and sin may have an end" (Dan. ix. 24). By "one oblation He perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14). He, *therefore*, being thus "consummated, became to all that obey

Him, the cause of eternal salvation" (Heb. v. 9). Let us then meditate on the admirable order with which Jesus fulfilled "the days of His flesh," and let us pray to Him by His most holy death, that, at the hour of our death, we may be found to have "fulfilled the Divine law" (Rom. ii. 27), and to "have finished" well "the course" of our Priesthood (2 Tim. iv. 7).

2. *And bowing His head.* The manner in which Christ willed to die, was to bow His adorable head, in token of perfect obedience to the command of His Father, to Whom He became "obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross" (Phil. ii. 8). He proclaimed to the world, that, as He had fulfilled His Father's will through life, so also He rendered Him obedience in His death: "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I" (St. John xiv. 31). Thus was it the fire of love,—that is, the Holy Spirit, the hypostatic Love of the Father and the Son,—Who immolated the Divine holocaust: "Who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted to God" (Heb. ix. 14). In bowing His Head, Jesus declared to earth, that His Sacrifice had had the desired effect; that is to say, "into the face of man," once dead in sin, "was breathed the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). To the sinner, once an enemy, was given the kiss of reconciliation and of peace; when the Saviour turned His Face to him, as though to give him the kiss of peace (says St. Bonaventure). O great High Priest, who can thank Thee for all these inventions of Thy mercy! When shall I begin to love Thee with the fervour which befits one who is Thy minister, and who is acquainted with these august mysteries? Bow down Thy head to me, and breathe into me Thy love.

3. *He gave up the ghost.* The Eternal Word, Who had united His Soul to His Body, and assumed both, alone had power to separate them, and so to fulfil the supreme act of Priesthood (says St. John Damascene). Therefore He "gave up" His "spirit" into the hands of His Father, to shew that He had that power of which He had formerly spoken to His enemies (St. John x. 18). Then He immolated the Victim, and offered the Sacrifice decreed from all eternity, promised from the beginning of the world, fore-

shadowed by innumerable types, predicted by so many prophets, begun in Mary's womb, and continued throughout His whole life. Then was homage and thanksgiving, worthy of the Divine Majesty, rendered to God; and pardon, and every other grace, obtained for all mankind. Christ died and subjected Himself to the punishment of sin, in order to free us from the fear of death, which held men in slavery all their life; to teach us to die to sin, as He died to the penalty of sin; and to fill us with all good things. Let us then, on this day, honour His death, which has been the means of salvation both to our soul and body. Our Saviour's single death (says St. Augustine) saved us from the double death which was our due. With the same holy Father, let us bless God for having given us so holy a Priest,—a Victim taken from among ourselves, yet without sin, to cleanse us from our sins; so that the flesh of our Sacrifice is the Body of our Priest. Let us thank our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has loved us so greatly, Who has given Himself for us, as if for each one of us alone (Gal. ii. 20). Let us thank Him that, through the merits of His death, He has engrafted us into His Priesthood, to continue the offering of this same Sacrifice. Let us pray to Him that we may die mystically with Him, in order that we may live in Him in this life, and after the death of our body may dwell with Him for ever.

"Into Thy hands I commend my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth."—*Ps.* xxx. 6.

"O great High Priest, who wast made the death of death and the sting of hell, redeem our soul from the hand of hell."—From *Ps.* xlviii. 16.

HOLY SATURDAY.

MARY'S DESOLATION TO BE HONOURED BY PRIESTS.

I. THE EXTENT OF THIS DESOLATION.
II. THE CONSOLATION SHE RECEIVED.
III. THE REWARD SHE GIVES TO THOSE WHO SHARE HER SORROW.

"And from that hour the disciple took Her to his own."—*St. John* xix. 27.

1. *And from that hour the disciple took Her to his own.* Who can express the greatness of Mary's desolation, when She was left with John in the place of Her beloved Son? The Prophet has described it in these words: "Weeping She hath wept in the night, and Her tears are on Her cheeks; there is none to comfort Her among all them that were dear to Her" (Lam. i. 2). "He hath made Me desolate, wasted with sorrow all the day long" (Lam. i. 13). She assuredly was not ignorant of God's command given by the Preacher: "Shed tears over the dead . . . and for fear of being ill-spoken of, weep bitterly . . . and make mourning for him according to his merits for a day or two, for fear of detraction" (Eccli. xxxviii. 16, 17, 18). And, indeed, Christ is called "the first-born from the dead" (Col. i. 18), and "the first-fruits of them that sleep" (1 Cor. xv. 20). To Him then tears were due, to Him was due a bitter weeping in His burial, because of His infinite merits; and this weeping was to last for a day or two, that is, for as many days as intervened before His resurrection. Moreover, Mary's desolation had been foretold by Zacharias,

when, announcing the death of the Messias, he says: "They shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over Him, as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born" (Zech. xii. 10). Now Jesus was at the same time Mary's "only Son," and Her "first-born Son" (St. Matt. i. 25); and therefore was Her weeping doubly bitter. It was the model of all weeping. And indeed, if we look upon Mary (as we have elsewhere looked upon Her) as the figure and model of the Church, we shall well understand that it became Her to represent in Her Person the weeping of the Church over Her divine Spouse. Let us meditate upon Mary, weeping over the death of Her Son, not only in Her own name, but, as it were, in the name of the Eternal Father; for He would not that the cruel death of His Son should pass unmourned; and since, because of His infinite blessedness, He could not honour it with tears, this office was laid on Mary. Hence St. Bernard says that we cannot speak nor conceive of Mary's sorrow except by considering that it was grief adequate to such a Mother mourning for such a Son. O Mother, how do I mourn with Thee in Thy desolation!

2. *The Disciple* sought to console Mary by "taking Her to his own," by participating in Her sorrows, by remaining with Her. We, who were represented by St. John, should imitate him in his sympathy; for in the beloved disciple all the Faithful are designated; and (as St. Bernardine says) we may understand, mystically, in John the souls of the elect, of whom by love the Blessed Virgin is made the Mother. Jeremias desired in spirit to console our Lady in Her bitter grief: "To what shall I equal Thee, that I may comfort Thee, O Virgin Daughter of Sion?" (Lam. ii. 13). We priests can give Her great consolation, if we meditate, and make our people meditate, on Her sorrows; especially in the devotion of the Seven Dolors, after the method of St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure. Let us promote among the Faithful devotion to "Maria Desolata"; that She may not have cause to complain of Priests as of Her friends: "I called My friends and they deceived Me" (St. Bernard). When Almighty God established the sun and the moon in the firmament of heaven, and ordained that "*the* greater light" should "rule the day," and "the lesser light

the night" (Gen. i. 16), it was not without mystical meaning. For Jesus is "the Sun of Justice," and went down, as it were, like the sun, in His death; and therefore we must have recourse to Mary, who is "beautiful as the moon." Even though She seems sometimes obscured by the clouds of Her most bitter sorrows, yet let us still turn our eyes towards Her. For our salvation She went to Calvary, rich with the treasure of Her Divine Son, but returned impoverished of that treasure: "The Almighty hath quite filled Me with bitterness: I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me back empty" (Ruth i. 20, 21). As a second Rachel, she mourned for the loss of Her Son, and found no comfort" (Jer. xxxi. 15). She uttered not a word (says St. Lawrence Justinian); for grief had absorbed Her heart. But whilst (as St. Bernardine observes) a loss infinitely less caused the death of the wife of Phinees (1 Kings iv. 19), Mary, for our sake, sustained as by a miracle, survived Her anguish. We too can console Her by thanking Her for all that She has suffered for us, praying to Her to impress the wounds of Her Son on our heart.

3. The care which the beloved disciple bestowed on the Mother of Jesus in Her desolation was surely well rewarded by Her Son (as St. Bernard says). We also, by sharing in Her sorrows, may look for our reward in a participation of Her glory. We shall know by experience that She is indeed, as She is called by the Church, the "Comforter of the afflicted." Let us have recourse to Her in our tribulations, and we shall find Her the consolation of our soul. Let us also exhort the Faithful to honour Her in Her sorrow, while we teach them to do so by our example. In this way may we gain the Plenary Indulgence granted by the Church to those who once in the year pray for an hour in honour of the Dolours of our Blessed Lady.

"Thou hast set My tears in Thy sight."—*Ps.* lv. 8.

"I will comfort Thee and make Thee joyful after Thy sorrow."—From *Jer.* xxxi. 13.

EASTER SUNDAY.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST IN HIS RESURRECTION.

I. He consummates the Victim in Himself.
II. He will consummate It in His members.
III. The acknowledgment which He demands of us.

"Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, brought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus."—*St. Mark* xvi. 1.

1. *Brought sweet spices.* The pious women who brought sweet spices to honour Jesus in the sepulchre, were a figure of the Church. They represented His Church, which should afterwards recognise His Divinity in His new birth from the tomb to eternal life, corresponding, as it did, to His birth from the womb of Mary to mortal life. We, too, as Priests, being the chief portion of His Church, ought especially to honour this new birth of Jesus Christ, and to meditate upon the consummation of the Sacrifice which He then finally completed. In the holocaust, the Victim, after the sacrifice, was to be wholly consumed by fire, in order to abolish all its imperfections, and for a token of the supreme dominion of God, as represented by this destruction of life, shewing that the victim was accepted, and also, as it were, consumed, by Him Who is "a consuming fire" (Deut. iv. 24). Hence Jesus, the great High Priest, first immolated the Victim on the Altar of the Cross, but afterwards in a manner consummated It, in rising from the tomb, as He had promised: "The

third day I am consummated" (St. Luke xiii. 32). The Divine fire of His Father's glory inflamed and consumed mortality, and all likeness to sinful flesh, in the Body of Jesus, so that every infirmity of the sons of Adam was wholly destroyed, cancelled, and absorbed in that glory. His most holy Body, without losing the reality of human flesh, divested Itself of all that was vile in such flesh, and was penetrated with the Majesty which became the Only-begotten Son of the Father. As a Victim, in His Passion He was "a little lower than the Angels;" but in His Resurrection "He was crowned with glory and honour," and that altogether Divine. Let us rejoice with our Lord in His great glory, and give thanks to Him from our heart.

2. *That coming.* The women came to the sepulchre, even as the whole body of the Church militant goes to its own tomb and derives from Christ's tomb that power which enables the members of the Mystical Body to rise holy and glorious. At the end of the world the Mystical Body of Jesus will participate in the consummation of Its Head, as It has participated in the sanctification, the oblation, and immolation of the Sacrifice which He offered as "a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God" (Rom. xii. 1). Then will come to pass that perfect consummation which will raise us to the glory of the Angels. Thus does Venerable Bede (commenting on our Lord's words, "the third day I am consummated"), observe that, as He was consummated after three days, so, at the end of the Resurrection (which will be as it were consummated on the third day), His mystical Body the Church shall in its immortality attain to Angelic perfection. Let us, then, regard the consummation of Christ as the pledge of our consummation; for, "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22). But alas! though we shall all indeed rise again, yet "we shall not all be changed." Blessed indeed are they whose resurrection shall be unto life, in whom all that is corruptible and mortal shall have passed away, and who shall be transformed into the likeness of their risen Lord! "for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. xv. 53). Let us meditate on the instruction which the Apostle draws from these truths: "Be

ye steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58).

3. *That they might anoint Jesus.* The piety of the women who sought to anoint the Body of Jesus was most praiseworthy (says St. Peter Chrysologus); but they prepared tokens of mourning to carry to His grave, rather than emblems of joy in the divine triumph of His Resurrection. We, on the contrary, know this great mystery; and therefore (as St. Gregory tells us) we ought to carry other spices to Jesus, viz., our faith, with the fragrance of virtues and good works. And Priests, above all, should be clad in the brightest virtues on this happy day—this first of all days, this day which represents the consummation of their Priesthood. Let the Ministers of the Risen Saviour pay their homage to Him, and give Him thanks for that He has not shown Himself the enemy of man, who had treated Him so unworthily, nor manifested His displeasure towards His first Priests, who had abandoned Him so vilely, but, on the contrary, returns to live among them, and consummates the Victim of their Redemption. Prostrate before Him let them sing with the "Ancients" of the Apocalypse, this new canticle: "The Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction" (Apoc. v. 12). Let us beg of Him to glorify the sacerdotal dignity in the Clergy, that it may be acknowledged as the most sacred work of Him, Who is "God blessed for ever."

"Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour."—*Ps.* viii. 6.

"O great High Priest, who for us sanctifiest Thyself, sanctify us in truth."—From *St. John* xvii. 17.

EASTER MONDAY.

PRIESTS SHOULD BE THE FIRST TO MEDITATE ON THE MYSTERY OF THE RESURRECTION.

I. To shew their love for their Master.
II. To put themselves in a state of holy joy.
III. To bless the houses of the Faithful.

"And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen."—*St. Mark* xvi. 2.

1. *Very early in the morning the first day of the week.* The pious women who, notwithstanding the weakness of their sex, braved the perils of the night, and did that which the Apostles dared not do—gave excellent proof of the fervour of their charity (says Venerable Bede). Now, as it was not to the Apostles' honour to be anticipated by these women in manifesting their love for their Master, neither would it become Priests to allow the Faithful to be before them in rejoicing with Jesus in His recent triumph. And surely we are bound to shew this joy in the victory of the "Lion of Judah," Who by His own might rose all-powerful; Who has slain death, conquered the Prince of death, set at liberty His captive people, opened the gate of life; Who died and rose again, that He might have dominion over the living and the dead. Priests especially, who are the Ministers of this great High Priest, should be the first to approach Him, that they may share in His triumph as representatives of the whole body of the Faithful. If they daily touch and eat His Flesh, and if that *Flesh* was raised in glory, as at this time—that

Flesh, once pale in death, now far brighter than the sun; those limbs, once racked with anguish, now shining with heavenly splendour;—surely it is for them to give thanks to Him for this His great glory. As the "ancients" of Israel came to salute David when he was anointed king in Hebron, so should the "ancients," the Priests, of the Christian people, hasten to pay their homage to the Son of David at this season of His exaltation as King of kings. In other words, they should meditate on the mystery of the Resurrection; for it is only by means of meditation that things which are beyond the cognisance of the outward senses can be made to influence the heart.

2. *They came to the sepulchre.* The women went to a monument of sadness and sorrow, bearing in their mind a lively remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ; but they found there a subject of immense joy in the news of His Resurrection. During these days the Church makes us repeat continually the words of the Psalm (cxvii. 24): "This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice therein;" and doubtless She desires that Priests, who are bound to recite this joyous Antiphon, should be the first to be inebriated with holy joy. Truly is Easter "the day which the Lord hath made:" it is the day of the Lord, inasmuch (says Albertus Magnus) as it is "the day of nature, the day of glory, the day of grace." It is "the day of nature," made by the Lord, because Jesus Christ, "the Sun of Justice," by the light of His glorious Resurrection, made this day radiant with the beams of His glory. Further, it is the "day of grace," because it was on this day that our Saviour gave Priests commission to forgive sins (St. John xx. 23), and therefore may it be justly called a day of salvation. Lastly, it is the "day of glory," because from this day began the eternal life of human flesh, and the glory reserved for the flesh of faithful Christians in eternity (as St. Gregory of Nyssa points out). Now, if the Priest's heart be penetrated with these truths, what joy will they not bring to him? May he not say with the Prophet: "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in God my Jesus?" (Hab. *iii. 18*).

3. *The sun being now risen.* The women arrived at the

Sepulchre just as the rising of the sun announced the opening of the happy day which brought salvation to the human race. And it is the privilege of the clergy to announce this joyful day to the Faithful, and to diffuse among them the Easter blessing,—that blessing of God, which is a rich treasure to every household, and drives away affliction: "The blessing of the Lord maketh men rich, neither shall affliction be joined to them" (Prov. x. 22). Its effects are experienced in an especial manner by the just, and are quickly manifested: "The blessing of God maketh haste to reward the just, and in a swift hour His blessing beareth fruit" (Eccli. xi. 24). Therefore be it far from the minds of Priests to be influenced by any thought of gain: but let them purify their intention, and implore from their heart God's blessing on the souls and bodies of their spiritual children. Let us fulfil this special duty of the Priest, keeping before our eyes the rule established by St. Charles Borromeo, of imparting it to those who are worthy of it, and denying it to the unworthy; availing ourselves of this opportunity to give "salutary admonitions" to every household, and to correct all that is contrary to Christian modesty of life. How great good can be effected by a zealous and prudent Priest on such an occasion! What account will he give to Almighty God should he have neglected or carelessly fulfilled this sacred duty? How often has it been rendered ineffectual through negligence, or self-interest, or human respect!

"This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice therein."—*Ps.* cxvii. 24.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."—*Apoc.* xx. 6.

EASTER TUESDAY.

THE EFFORTS TO BE MADE BY PRIESTS FOR THE FULFILMENT OF THE EASTER PRECEPT.

I. DIFFICULTIES TO BE REMOVED.
II. LABOUR TO BE ENDURED.
III. RELIANCE TO BE PLACED IN GOD'S HELP.

"And they said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking, they saw the stone rolled back; for it was very great."—*St. Mark* xvi. 3.

1. *Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?* The Church has commanded all the Faithful of both sexes to communicate at Easter. The devil accordingly fails not to exaggerate the difficulty of fulfilling this precept; and hence it becomes us, as the Ministers of Reconciliation, to remind our people that even the holy women were discouraged at the prospect of removing the great stone which closed the door of the sepulchre. They approached it with timidity and doubt; their heart and their eyes were closed (says St. Peter Chrysologus); and therefore they saw not that the difficulty had disappeared, and that the stone was removed. In like manner sinners, who should return to Jesus and receive Him sacramentally, are dismayed by the heavy burden of their iniquities, and by the vicious habits which they have contracted. This stone was a figure of any evil habit (says St. Augustine); and it also (according to Albertus Magnus) represents the hardness of heart usually to be found in *habitual* sinners. Priests must encourage the Faithful, when they

are thus terrified by the devil, by assuring them that through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ there is given to them a power to rise from any habit of sin, however grievous it may be, if only they will not keep the heavy stone closed upon themselves. They must be convinced that, if they seek Jesus devoutly, the hardness of their heart will be dissolved. The Angel, "coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it" (St. Matt. xxviii. 2). Shall not we, who are also the "Angels of the Lord," strive, in like manner, to remove the difficulties of the Faithful, who desire to make a good confession?

2. *It was very great.* St. Thomas says that this stone was "great" on account of its merit rather than of its bulk, since it sufficed to enclose and to cover the Body of the Creator of the World. As regards the Easter precept, Priests remove a stone which is truly great, for they are concerned in restoring to their Heavenly Father His lost children. Who indeed can deny that during these Easter days zealous Priests have to endure great labour? They have frequently to remain many hours in the Confessional, and (as St. Bonaventure says) they must employ the greatest diligence, care, and circumspection, in questioning their penitents, so as to elicit from them (sometimes even as it were by craft) the sins which, through ignorance or false shame, they might otherwise conceal. They must exercise benevolence, sweetness of manner, and discretion; they must be ready to assist the penitent in lifting the stone and supporting its weight; they must aid the sinner by encouragement, by counsel, and (when necessary) by rebuke. What care and prudence is required in proposing salutary remedies and imposing penance! for extreme rigour or extreme indulgence are equally injurious to the sinner. But let us devote ourselves to this salutary labour with courage, and under the guidance of Divine wisdom, remembering that we are engaged in leading men back to the light of grace and glory.

3. *The stone was rolled back.* The same God Who, in a visible miracle, assisted these pious women by removing the material stone from the sepulchre, will, in like manner, assist both Confessor and Penitent by the invisible operation of His grace: for the

grace of the Holy Spirit (says St. Antony of Padua) strengthens what is weak, softens what is hard, and by the balsam of His love sweetens all that is bitter. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ furnishes us with so much grace, that we can make war in every possible way against sin. These three women, bearing each her sweet ointment, represented the mind, the tongue, and the hand;—the mind conveying contrition, compassion, devotion;—the tongue, discreet speech, devout prayer, full confession;—the hand, the seven works of mercy. So Cardinal Hugo. Let us consider what we can do on our part, and, for the rest, let us trust in God; let us trust in the help of grace, and impress this trust on our penitents; and both they and we shall find that God is more generous than we supposed.

"See my abjection and my labour."—*Ps.* xxiv. 18.

"Thy wisdom shall lead me soberly in my works, and shall preserve me by her power; so shall my works be acceptable."—*Wisdom* ix. 11, 12.

WEDNESDAY.

PRIESTS SHOULD ENDEAVOUR TO SANCTIFY THE JOY OF CHRISTIANS IN THE EASTER FESTIVAL.

I. How to excite this joy in the heart.
II. How to direct it to heavenly objects.
III. How to drive away vain fears.

"And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe, and they were astonished. Who saith to them: Be not affrighted."—*St. Mark* xvi. 5, 6.

1. *They saw . . . . clothed with a white robe.* St. Gregory says that the white robe, with which the Angel of the Lord

appeared clothed, served not only to awaken a holy joy in these women, but also to signify the splendour of our solemnity. Hence the Church also adorns her Priests with white vestments during the days of the Easter festival, in order that they may excite a holy joy in the hearts of the Faithful. And (says St. Jerome) most reasonable is this joy; for at Easter the enemy was conquered, the Kingdom was acquired, the King of Peace was sought and was found, never more to be lost. Under the old Dispensation, the Priests were charged to announce the day of the Paschal Solemnity to the Israelites with the sound of the trumpet (Ps. lxxx. 4). Now our trumpet is preaching (Isa. lviii. 1), and with this we ought to excite our people to rejoice in the Lord, "with joyful shouting, and with the sound of the cornet" (2 Paral. xv. 28). Let us make them understand that this day has not only chased away the shadows of night, but has removed the darkness of death. Hence the salutation with which the Priests of the Greek Church greet the Faithful in these days is, "Christ is risen." Can there be a more powerful motive for joy? can there be a more fitting expression of joy for a minister of Christ than this? Let us, with St. Bonaventure, picture to ourselves the Eternal Father saying to His Beloved Son: "Arise from the grave to magnify My glory, to repair the ruin of the Angels, to raise men out of their miserable state, to dissipate the malice of the Evil One." If we meditate on these truths, shall we not indeed rejoice?

2. *They saw a young man sitting on the right side.* The youth of the Angel was a type of our Resurrection (says St. Peter Chrysologus), for then there will be no old age; and He sat "on the right side," to point out to us a never-ending life, which is the inheritance of the Resurrection; for by the left hand (says St. Gregory) only our present life is designated, but by the right hand eternal life. It is for us, who are the Angels of the Lord, to teach our people that their joy ought to be spiritual—a joy of the mind, a joy of the soul (as St. Chrysostom calls it). We are considering Christ's Resurrection, and consequently our own Resurrection, which will be either to eternal life or to everlasting death, and therefore have we a most powerful incentive to avoid

sin and to do good works. Let us, then, make our people understand that Easter joy consists not in debauchery, in excess, in riot, in dissipation of mind. That it is so desecrated is rather a matter for weeping, and a cloud to the brightness of the Paschal festival. Not for such a purpose (says St. Bernard) did Christ rise again, but for our justification. The mind of the Church, as we ought to explain to our people, is to refresh the body exhausted by the Lenten fast, without obscuring the purity of the soul; so that what is not gained by bodily abstinence (as St. Augustine says), may be compensated by holiness of mind.

3. *Be not affrighted.* The Angel removed vain fear from the mind of the women, and we ought to remove it from the mind of those who are oppressed with carnal desires. Such persons fear that by preserving unstained the purity they have acquired through the holy Sacraments at Easter, and by persevering in the love of God, they will lead an unhappy life. We must assure them, with St. Jerome, that there is no fear in love; and ask them why they are affrighted. We must assure them, that tribulation and anguish horribly torment the soul of those who work evil, but that "glory, and honour, and peace," are the inheritance of "every one that worketh good" (Rom. ii. 9, 10). He who keeps God's law is ever joyful, and is like a conqueror who "hath found great spoils," enriching himself with the prey taken from the enemy (Ps. cxviii. 162). Preserve in me, O my God, the holy joy of Easter; preserve it in the souls of those committed to my charge, that from it we may pass to that eternal joy, of which our Paschal joy is but a figure.

"We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God we shall be exalted."—*Ps.* xix. 6.

"I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and will joy in My people."—*Isaias* lxv. 19.

THURSDAY.

SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION THE END OF ALL ECCLESIASTICAL LABOUR.

I. THE END OF MEDITATION.
II. THE END OF SPIRITUAL EXERCISES.
III. THE END OF PASTORAL SOLICITUDE.

"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified. He is risen, He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him."—*St. Mark* xvi. 6.

1. *You seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified. He is risen.* The women sought Jesus crucified and dead, because the fierce tempest of His Passion had troubled their Faith (says St. Peter Chrysologus), and the weight of temptation had borne them down, so that they sought the Lord of Heaven in the sepulchre. But let us, who are blessed with a clearer faith, remember, as often as we meditate upon Jesus,—upon His teaching, His miracles, His birth, His life, His death, or upon any truth of religion (for Christ is the Truth),—that He is risen, and that His Resurrection is the foundation of our Religion: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. xv. 14). Let the words which He Himself spoke to St. John resound ever in our ears: "I am the first and the last, and alive and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and hell" (Apoc. i. 17, 18). These are indeed momentous truths, worthy of deep meditation. What reverence, what love towards Jesus, should they not excite in us! Let us consider that He "was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). In very truth (as St.

Thomas declares) the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was both the efficient and the exemplary cause of our justification; and therefore it should be the scope of all our meditations. If only we consider that Christ is risen, then we must strive to profit by the effects of His Resurrection, and by the pattern which He has given us, so as to live in holiness and justice all the days of our life.

2. *He is not here.* It befits not the Minister of Christ to be in the sepulchre, when his Lord is no longer there. Now what is the sepulchre, asks St. Ambrose, if not sin and evil habits? If we come not forth from this tomb, we rob the festival of its name of Pasch; for Pasch signifies "a passing-over;" and, in such a case (says St. Bernard), we are returning to the bondage of sin rather than passing out of it. Let us imitate Peter and John, who quickly left the sepulchre, and thus taught us that, in order to meditate on the Divine Mysteries as becomes Priests, we must, in a certain sense, go out of ourselves, and abandon every carnal habit (as St. Thomas explains). If, indeed, we expect change of life in our people,—that is, if we expect sinners to be converted, and the just to become more and more holy,—we must ourselves give the example of a new life: "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4). If we are to announce the Resurrection to the Faithful, let us imitate the Angel who announced this glad tidings in the form of a youth; that is to say, let us be vigorous in good works; let us place ourselves "on the right side;" that is to say, let us be intent on eternity, putting on the "robe" of perseverance, and shining with the whiteness of a pure and innocent life.

3. *Behold the place where they laid Him.* Let us duly consider the ends for which Christ rose from the dead. By His Resurrection, not only did He manifest the rewards of His justice, not only did He strengthen our faith and raise our hope, but He also gave us a pattern by which to form (as St. Thomas says) the spiritual life of the Faithful. All this we should diligently explain to our people, and say to them, with St. Paul, "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall have no more dominion over Him" (Rom. vi. 9). And thus must we also

die wholly to sin, and return to it no more. The Faithful, therefore, rising from sin in the Easter Festival, should strive to imitate Christ's Resurrection. Hence their Resurrection must be real, not feigned,—prompt, not tardy,—stable, not transitory. Moreover, as Christ, at His Resurrection, caused many of the dead to rise again and appear in Jerusalem, so is it most pleasing to God that those who are newly converted should bring other souls to penance by their example. Let us impress on them vigilance in flying from occasions of sin, and continual prayer to God; for these are the two great means of obtaining perseverance, since "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak" (St. Matt. xxvi. 41).

"I will arise early; I will give praise to Thee, O Lord, among the people."—*Ps.* lvi. 9.

"Stay with us, Lord, because it is towards evening, and the day is now spent."—*St. Luke* xxiv. 29.

FRIDAY.

THE CONSTANT REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION MOST PROFITABLE TO MINISTERS OF THE SANCTUARY.

I. As a defence against unbelief.
II. As a support in Apostolic labours.
III. For the due celebration of Mass.

"But go, tell His disciples and Peter, that He goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him as He told you."—*St. Mark* xvi. 7.

1. *Tell His disciples and Peter.* The Angel desired the Women to go at once, and announce the Resurrection of their Master

to the Apostles, that the joyful news might speedily be impressed upon their soul. The women accordingly ran to announce it to the disciples, by whom the Faith was to be spread over the whole world. The Angel made special mention of Peter, lest (says St. Gregory) he should despair, because of his denial, or suppose that he had forfeited the Primacy in the Church, which his Master had promised him. Hence, of all the Apostles, Peter had so lively and constant a remembrance of this great fact that, when another Apostle was to be chosen in place of Judas, he gave no other reason than that he might be a witness, together with the rest of the Apostles, of Christ's Resurrection (Acts i. 22). Nor did he insist on any other point than this truth in his first and second sermons (Acts ii. 14; iii). Moreover, all the Apostles, in promulgating the Gospel, confined themselves to giving testimony, which they did with great boldness, to the fact of the Resurrection: "With great power did the Apostles give testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord" (Acts iv. 33). So also did St. Paul, who founded almost all his arguments on this one truth (Acts xxiv. 21). Even in the Areopagus he proclaimed it before that famous assembly (Acts xvii). Therefore, if we would have part in the Apostolical Ministry, if we would not be degenerate sons of such glorious Fathers, let us defend this mystery against the assaults of infidelity, which in attacking this doctrine would shake religion to its very foundations. Even in these days there are not wanting "enemies of the Cross" and of the Resurrection of Christ, who must be "reproved" (Titus i. 11). Woe then to those Priests, who, either from ignorance, or negligence, or human respect, can say: "I became as a man that heareth not, and that hath no reproofs in his mouth" (Ps. xxxvii. 15).

2. *He goeth before you into Galilee.* The name Galilee signifies "transmigration." The Angel promised that the disciples should see Jesus in Galilee, according to His own command, in order to point out to us that the Church should see Him in her passage from earth to heaven, whither He "is gone before" in soul and body, and will be followed (as St. Gregory says) by those who pass from vice to the perfection of virtue. Therefore, by remem-

brance of Christ's Resurrection, which is the pattern of ours, we ought to encourage ourselves in the practice of every virtue, and especially in the work of the Ministry. Hence the Apostle exhorted Timothy to be ever "mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead" (2 Tim. ii. 8), and added: "wherein I labour even unto bonds, as an evil doer;" as though he would say, "Strengthened by this remembrance, I support the labours of the Apostolate, and endure imprisonment as an evil doer: do thou also draw courage and consolation from the recollection of this precious truth." Thus (says St. Chrysostom) he who in the Priesthood leads a heavenly life shall obtain eternal life in Heaven. The Resurrection of Christ was the fortitude of the Martyrs; for in His Resurrection they discerned their own. Those who succeed to the Apostolic Ministry would be (as St. Paul says) "of all men most miserable," if they were not nourished by this consoling hope, "if in this life only they had hope in Christ." Why, then, do we not often call to mind this mystery? Why do we not place it as "the beginning of our joy," as the subject of frequent meditation, as an incentive to love and zeal?

3. *As He told you.* The same Jesus Who told His disciples to meet together in Galilee said also these words: "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (St. Luke xxii. 19). He commanded that the Sacrifice of the Mass should be offered, in memory of all that He had wrought for our salvation. Therefore, in offering It, Priests make express mention not only of His Passion, but also of His Resurrection: "Unde et memores . . . Domini nostri tam beatæ Passionis, necnon et ab inferis Resurrectionis." . . . Moreover, before the Canon, we offer the Oblation to the Blessed Trinity, "in memory of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ." And, in very truth, it is the risen, glorified Body of Jesus Christ which comes into our hands; and the Mass is a representation of His whole life. In the Mass, our Lord has left us a memorial of all His wonderful works, and therefore He has not omitted the memory of His Resurrection: "He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful work." The Mass is full of infinite mysteries. They are as innumerable (says St. Bonaventure) as the drops of water in the ocean, as the angels in the heavens. In

it, therefore, we have a continual memorial of the present solemnity. Let us give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for having mercifully furnished us with such a powerful incentive to the love and service of Himself and of His Church; and let us implore Him to enable us to profit thereby aright, so that we may not receive in vain so great and salutary a benefit.

"I remembered the works of the Lord, for I will be mindful of Thy wonders from the beginning."—*Ps.* lxxxvi. 12.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth . . . this my hope is laid up in my bosom."—*Job* xix. 25—27.

SATURDAY.

THREE GRACES TO BE ASKED THROUGH MARY BY HER SON'S RESURRECTION.

I. To seek consolation only in Jesus.
II. To rest tranquilly in the Faith.
III. To be detached from every carnal affection.

"But there are also many other things which Jesus did."—*St. John* xxii. 25.

1. If *there are many other things which Jesus did*, which the Evangelists have not narrated, one of these, most certainly, was His appearance to Mary after His Resurrection. There was no occasion to express it, because (as Rupertus says) it is easy to understand that this Son, Who in His law commands men to honour their parents, would not fail to honour His Blessed Mother by His presence. Elsewhere, it had been foretold that while, in His Passion, He would be for Mary "a bundle of myrrh," He would also be "a cluster of Cyprus" (Cant. i. 13), and She well

deserved that for Her the hour of His Resurrection should be hastened, in answer to Her prayer: "Return, be like, my beloved, to a roe or to a young hart" (Cant. ii. 17). Nor was it fitting that Jesus should delay to console His Mother, Whose soul had been transfixed with the sword of grief. Mary was therefore the first to behold Him risen immortal "from the bosom of the earth," as She had been the first to behold Him born a mortal from Her womb, and "she kept all these things, comparing them one with another in her heart." "Rejoice, therefore, O Queen of Heaven" —thus will I sing to Thee with holy Church—"for He Whom Thou wast meet to bear hath arisen." With my whole heart will I repeat this canticle, at the joyful strains of which the destroying angel sheathed his sword, when the plague ceased in Rome. Suffer me not to seek consolation out of Jesus, and obtain for me, that I may be able to say to Him: "Turning to me Thou hast comforted me" (Ps. lxx. 21); "Thy comforts have given joy to my soul" (Ps. xciii. 19). What true and solid joy can creatures give me, to be compared with the joy which my Creator gives me? That alone is true and solid joy, in comparison with which I declare (with St. Bernard), that every joy is sorrow, every pleasure pain, all sweetness bitter. Grant, O my God, that I may so live as to merit Thy consolations, and to refuse all others! for he (says the same St. Bernard) is unworthy of heavenly blessing who seeks for and obtains the miserable consolations of earth.

2. Not without reason was this appearance of our Lord passed over among "the many things which Jesus did;" for it served not the end to which all His other appearances were directed. He appeared to His disciples, in order that they might believe in His Resurrection; He reproved them for their unbelief, He convinced them of the reality of the miracle by many proofs; so that these appearances are related to confirm the faith of His disciples. But in the case of Mary it was otherwise. She believed this truth perfectly without seeing it, and therefore His appearance to Her is not recorded as a motive to belief. Let us ask of Mary to procure for us by Her intercession the grace to rest tranquilly in the faith, after Her example, and not to seek arguments or miracles to attach us to the Roman Church. St. Bernard, in

explaining our Lord's words to Mary Magdalen, "Do not touch Me," says that he touches Jesus worthily who receives Him as already sitting at the Right Hand of the Father. Faith, which cannot be deceived, embraces things invisible, feels no need of the bodily senses, is not limited by human reason, nor by the laws of nature, nor by experience. This Faith is the precious inheritance of Priests, through which they find peace in the very strife of life. Let us pray to Mary to preserve, increase, and perfect it in our souls.

3. We may observe another motive for the Evangelists' silence in regard to our Lord's appearance to His Mother, viz., to shew us that every carnal affection should be dead in those who, like Jesus, are alive only to God. Maternal affection would have diminished, rather than confirmed, the truth of the Resurrection in the eyes of carnal men. Let us, then, also learn to detach ourselves from every carnal affection; let us learn of Jesus, Who, whilst He made it known that He had a Mother (says St. Augustine), manifested disregard of earthly relationship, as an example to His disciples of detachment from such ties. How often (says St. Jerome) does a mistaken filial piety, in the case of Priests, by being carried to excess become impiety towards God. In proportion as the Priest detaches himself from earthly relationship, the closer will be his union with the universal Father (says St. Gregory). Let us pray to the great Mother of God, through the joy She tasted in Her Son's Resurrection, to detach us from every affection, which may be a hindrance to our union with God and to the perfect fulfilment of our Priestly duties.

"O Mary, in the day of the joy of Thy heart, hearken to the voice of my prayer."—From *Cant.* iii. 11; *Ps.* v. 2.

"Three things I have asked of Thee, deny them not to me before I die."—From *Prov.* xxx. 7.

LOW SUNDAY.

GOOD PRIESTS MINISTERS OF PEACE.

I. THEY ASK OF GOD PEACE FOR THE CHURCH.
II. THEY PRESERVE IT IN THEIR HEART.
III. THEY SHED IT ABROAD IN THE FAITHFUL.

"Now when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them: Peace be to you. And when He had said this, He shewed them His hands and His side. The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord. He said therefore to them again: Peace to you."—*St. John* xx. 19—21.

1. *He said to them, Peace be to you.* Jesus Christ, when He saluted His disciples, gave them this blessing of Peace in order to show the efficacy of the Cross, upon which He purchased it with His Blood. For by that Cross He obtained for us freedom from all sorrow, and abundance of all good; and this (says St. Chrysostom) is Peace. Through the merits of Christ crucified we obtain Peace from God; nor can we obtain it from any other than from God, Who is the Author of all good, and, much more, the Author of so great a good as Peace. By Him it is shed abroad in the heart of each one of the Faithful who love His law; by Him, when He wills to bestow it, it is given to the whole Church. Peace is good in itself, and hinders a multitude of evils far greater than any evils occasioned by it (says St. Thomas). In giving Peace to His Church, Almighty God hinders many vices which are opposed to peace, such as discord of heart, strife of tongue, schism, quarrels, and war. Rightly, then, does Holy Church implore Peace in the numerous prayers which she offers to God

through His ministers. In the Canon of the Mass she asks of the Eternal Father to pacify His Church, and, in the words added by St. Gregory, that He would dispose "our days in His peace," and that "in His mercy He would grant peace in our days." Moreover, at the "Agnus Dei" we implore the Lamb of God to grant us peace; we beseech Him, in memory of His legacy to His Apostles, that He would pacify and unite His Church. Do we offer these prayers with fervour? Do we adequately regard their importance and necessity?

2. *The disciples therefore were glad.* The Apostle, enumerating the fruits of the Holy Spirit, joins joy to peace: "the fruit of the spirit is charity, joy, peace" (Gal. v. 22), and, in truth (as St. Thomas says), Peace is the perfection of joy. Therefore, if we would imitate the Apostles, who were the first Priests of the new dispensation, let us participate in their "spiritual joy," and in the peace which Jesus gave them. His peace (says St. Thomas again) consists in tranquillity of disposition, especially in regard to the will. It is true we cannot have "full and perfect peace" in this life; for that is reserved (as St. Augustine tells us) for those who enjoy the blessed vision of God. But yet we can and ought so to love the divine law, as to enjoy abundance of peace: "Much peace have they that love Thy law" (Ps. cxviii. 165). St. Paul invoked this blessing on Timothy and Titus (and in their persons on all ministers of the Sanctuary), whom he instructs in the three letters which he addressed to them (1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 2; Titus i. 4). All the pleasures of sense cannot equal the peace of God which keeps our soul: "The peace of God which surpasseth all understanding, keep . . . your minds" (Phil. iv. 7). Let us preserve, strengthen, increase, charity in ourselves, for peace springs from charity; without charity there is no peace (says St. Augustine). Moreover, we have Jesus, Who is "the God of peace and of love" (2 Cor. xiii. 11), continually in our hands, and He is "our Peace, who hath made both one" (Eph. ii. 14). Why do we not, then, implore Him to give us Peace? Why do we not call to mind, that on this day He gave it twice to His Apostles, our Fathers and Masters?

3. *He said therefore to them again: Peace be unto you.* Bishops

have learnt from our Lord Jesus Christ to salute the people in the Sacred Liturgy, with these words: "Peace be to you." He Himself has prescribed that, in entering into any house, we should first say: "Peace be to this house" (St. Luke x. 5); and therefore Holy Church places this salutation in the mouth of her Priests: "Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it." But to be a Minister of Peace in name only—this does not suffice: a Priest must be "not quarrelsome, nor covetous" (1 Tim. iii. 3), "not litigious, but gentle" (Titus iii. 2); he must appease tumults, restore tranquillity to families, reconcile those who are at variance, and, by wise admonitions, prevent the evils of discord. This has been ever the most difficult, but, at the same time, the most precious occupation of Holy Bishops and Priests, who thus merited the Beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (St. Matt. v. 9). For (says St. Jerome) they are called peacemakers, who strive to impart to others the peace which they enjoy in their own heart. The Priest must likewise preach "the Gospel of peace" (Eph. vi. 15); for the Gospel, well preached and well followed, is the chief means to obtain peace with God, with ourselves, and with others. Lastly, by the administration of the Sacraments, which confer or augment sanctifying grace, a Priest's office is to infuse and establish true peace in the heart; for without these requisites there can be but a false peace. What a fatal omission is it, then, in a Priest, not to procure this great benefit for the Faithful, when he might do so! Will he not, however, be doubly guilty, if, instead of being "a man of peace," he becomes, either in his own family or among others, "a man of strife" (Jere. xv. 10), that is, the promoter of discord? And what account can Priests give to God, whose people are split into parties through their detractions, enmities, and other public scandals? Let us ponder these words of the Holy Spirit: "my soul detesteth . . him that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. vi. 16—19). Let us (as St. Leo enjoins us) strive earnestly to diffuse Peace, wherever we possibly can do so.

"With them that hated peace, I was peaceable."—*Ps.* cxix. 7.

"Thou wilt keep peace, peace because we have hoped in Thee."—Is. xxvi. 3.

MONDAY.

THE MISSION OF THE APOSTLES AND OTHER PRIESTS.

I. Its model.
II. Its dignity.
III. Its authority.

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you."—*St. John* xx. 21.

1. *As the Father hath sent Me.* St. Chrysostom, in explaining these words, by which our Saviour gave mission to His Apostles, observes, that He raised their mind to the most sublime thoughts, giving His life as their model, explaining the dignity of Him Who sent them and showing His supreme authority. And, in deed, Jesus Christ, in the first place, reminded them of the things which He had done, that is to say, of the manner in which He had executed the mission committed to Him by His Father—viz., by a most perfect fulfilment of His Father's commands, by the entire consecration of Himself to Him, in the fulfilment of His eternal Priesthood. Here, then, is the model for Priests, here is the true idea of solid devotion, which Jesus Christ prescribed to His Apostles and to all Priests, and which consists in executing the works of the Ministry "with a most ready and devout mind" (Exod. xxxv. 21). Devotion indeed (as St. Thomas explains) is that special virtue, by which the will promptly dedicates itself to the things belonging to God's worship and service. Animated by this virtue, Apostolic men *fulfil* in the spirit, if not in the letter, the command given by

Eliseus to Giezi (2 Kings iv. 29), and by Christ to the Apostles (Luke x. 4): to "salute no man by the way;"—that is (as St. Ambrose explains), not to allow themselves to be distracted by anything which might hinder their Ministry. Animated by this virtue, they will perform their sacred functions with recollection, fervour, and exactness. Yet, alas! we sometimes find more devotion in poor women than in Ecclesiastics, and perceive in them a piety wanting in Priests. Whence springs this disorder? It arises from the want of humility and meditation. Are we in this unhappy condition?

2. *I also send you.* Jesus Christ elevated the Apostles by the Mission which He gave them. Apostolic Mission, in which all zealous Priests participate according to certain degrees, descends from above, and comes from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who sits at the Right Hand of the Father. This is no subject of wonder to those who reflect that the Church is (as St. Augustine shows) like a building inverted, that is, having its foundations in Heaven. It is a plant (says St. Chrysostom), whose root is in Heaven. It is "a coat without seam, woven from the top throughout" (St. John xix. 23). Hence the Priest who has lawful Mission, can say to the people, with Moses: "He Who is hath sent me to you" (Exod. iii. 14). He has sent me "Who is, and Who was, and Who will come to judge." The "Mediator between God and men" has sent me, even as He was sent by the Father. And, in like manner, as Christ said, "I am not alone, because the Father Who sent Me is with Me" (St. John xvi. 32)—so the Priest who is sent by God can say that Christ is with him; the end of his mission and Christ's Mission being the same, that is, the salvation of mankind. Surely, it is a real consolation to us thus to have our mission from Christ, "Who can have compassion on our infirmities," and has "experienced all sorrows." Let us meditate on these great truths, and let us learn to profit by them, so that we may be rich in merits and glorify our Ministry.

3. *I also send you.* In these words our Saviour explains His authority, giving His Apostles the virtue, the courage, the means, necessary for the fulfilment of their mission. He had chosen them,

poor, rude men as they were: He had sent them as sheep in the midst of wolves, in order to show His omnipotence. And, since the hand of the Lord is not shortened, He still abundantly furnishes Apostolic men with both intrinsic and extrinsic means for the success of the ministry committed to them. In some is renewed the miracle worked in Saul, who was "changed into another man" (1 Kings x. 6), and in all good Priests we perceive the operation of the grace of Order: "The grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands" (2 Tim. i. 6). Without such aid how could they do things beyond the power of nature? How could they be blameless? How could they have wisdom to guide souls, to impart the grace of the Sacraments aright, and to preach the Divine Word with fruit? How could they give men that twofold Kingdom of God;—the kingdom of which our Saviour said: "The kingdom of God is within you" (St. Luke xvii. 21), and that other Kingdom, in which the servants of God "shall reign for ever and ever" (Apoc. xxii. 5)? Let us trust in Jesus, Who will give us light and strength for the labours of the Ministry. Let us revive in ourselves the grace of Order, let us imitate the holy Apostles, and implore their protection.

"Send me help from the sanctuary, and defend me out of Sion."—From *Ps.* xix. 3.

"Send labourers into Thy harvest."—*St. Luke* x. 2.

TUESDAY.

THE GREAT NEED OF THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR THE MINISTERS OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

I. IN ORDER TO IMPART TO THEIR PENITENTS THE ROOT OF THESE GIFTS.

II. FOR THE GUIDANCE OF THE UNDERSTANDING, AS REGARDS FOUR OF THESE GIFTS.

III. FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF THE WILL AS REGARDS THE REMAINING THREE.

"When He had said this He breathed on them, and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost."—*St. John* xx. 22.

1. *He breathed on them.* Jesus breathed upon His Apostles when He instituted them Ministers of the Sacrament of Penance. By this action He clearly signified the nature of the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son; and further signified that He was the same Who breathed into the face of man the breath of life, so that man became a living soul. It was a sign, also, of the like power which He has imparted to His Priests, to pronounce with the breath of their lips the words "*Ego te absolvo;*" for then the sinner, who was dead to grace, becomes by the power of the Holy Spirit "a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7); then the breath of the Holy Spirit "blots out the dark cloud of sins" (Isa. xliv. 22); then is Charity infused into the heart, giving form to Faith and perfecting Hope; and from these

roots spring the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is certain that he who by absolution recovers charity, recovers, together with it, all the gifts of the Holy Spirit; for he who has charity (says St. Thomas) has all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Hence the Priest, who is the minister of Reconciliation, ought to be full of the Holy Ghost, and of Charity, in order that he may, as it were, breathe these gifts into his penitents, so as to incite them to true penance. Experience shows that Priests thus gifted are those who move to compunction, convert and sanctify, the greatest sinners.

2. *Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* This ceremony, and these words of our Saviour, were repeated over our heads by the Bishop at our ordination. Then was the Holy Spirit given us, to impart to us the grace, "*gratis data*," of remitting sins, and also to supply the special light necessary for so great a work. The Angelical Doctor observes that four of the gifts of the Holy Spirit belong to the intellect, three to the will. Thus, as regards the first four, we easily perceive that, in order to learn the truth, the speculative faculty is perfected by means of the understanding, the practical by means of counsel; while, in order to form a right judgment, the speculative faculty must be perfected by means of Wisdom, the practical by means of Knowledge. These gifts are connected together, and, so to speak, reciprocally minister to each other, "feeding one another," (as St. Gregory says). The good Confessor, by the gift of Understanding, perceives the manifold methods of grace for calling the Penitent, for putting him in the right way, for making him correspond with it, for keeping him from straying out of it. By the gift of Counsel, even in cases of greatest difficulty, he removes him from dangers, takes away obstacles, chooses means for his perseverance in good, and progress in virtue. By the gift of Wisdom he proposes to himself no other end than God; turning his attention neither to ambitious, worldly, nor sensual objects. By the gift of Knowledge he discovers the secrets of the conscience, unveils the snares of the devil, and dissipates all illusions, errors, and scruples, into which the Penitent may fall. Without these divine lights a Confessor is "blind and groping" (2 Pet. i. 9); he will be as one of those *false* prophets, "that see vain things, and that divine lies; they

shall not be in the counsel of My people" (Ezech. xiii. 9). Never, therefore, let us enter the Confessional without first invoking the Holy Spirit.

3. *Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* The gifts of the Holy Spirit are also specially needed for the will; in order that they may be in us (as St. Thomas says) principles of moral virtues; and in order that we may merit by this labour an eternal reward by proposing to ourselves a supernatural end. For, by the gift of Fortitude, the Confessor will reprove sinners when there is need, refuse absolution to those who are ill disposed, will be superior to human respect, will endure weariness, bitterness, annoyance, sorrow, troubles, and all the trials inseparable from this Ministry, and will preserve faithfully the seal of Confession: "I have made thee this day a fortified city, and a pillar of iron and a wall of brass" (Jerem. i. 18). By the gift of Piety, he will implore of God light and strength, for himself and for his Penitents; he will teach them pious exercises suitable to their state, he will instruct them in the practice of meditation on the great truths of religion, he will assist in detaching them from the pleasures of the world, so that they may taste the sweetness of piety, and experience that "godliness is profitable to all things" (1 Tim. iv. 8). Lastly, by the gift of the Fear of the Lord, he will learn to disregard the false and perverse judgments of men, and to fear only lest he be an unfaithful dispenser of the Blood of Jesus Christ: "He will crucify his flesh," so as not to be corrupted by the incentives which accompany and follow many Confessions, and he will know by experience "that no evils shall happen to him that feareth the Lord, but in temptation God will keep him, and deliver him from evils" (Eccli. xxxiii. 1). Let us, then, resolve that we will not trust to our own light, our own hope, our own virtue, for hearing Confessions; but in Holy Mass let us implore the gifts of the Holy Spirit, let us ask pardon for all our errors, and for all the faults we have committed in the guidance of consciences, and which have been caused by our neglect in imploring these gifts.

"Be Thou my helper: forsake me not, do not Thou despise me, O God, my Saviour."—*Ps.* xxvi. 9.

"Come, Spirit, and blow upon these slain, and let them live again."—*Ezechiel xxxvii. 9.*

WEDNESDAY.

THE POWER TO GIVE AND RETAIN SINS.

I. ITS DIVINE ORIGIN.
II. ITS SALUTARY EFFECTS.
III. THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH ARISE IN ITS EXERCISE.

"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."—*St. John* xx. 23.

1. *They are forgiven them.* These words conferred upon the Apostles, and have conferred also upon us, as the Council of Trent has defined, the power to forgive sins. By these words (says St. Gregory) Priests have a divine power; for, in God's place, they forgive some sins, they retain others. St. Chrysostom compares this power to the power of sovereigns, and finds it as superior to that as Heaven is to earth, as the soul is to the body. Should an earthly king confer on some subject the power to punish or to pardon whomsoever he pleased, this subject would be esteemed most fortunate by all men; and is not a priest infinitely more so, who frees from eternal evil, and bestows eternal happiness on whomsoever he will? St. Peter Damian says that this empire, which is wholly divine, has not been granted even to the angels. Let us meditate on those words: "Who can forgive sins but God only?" (St. Mark ii. 7). Let us consider also those other words which God speaks of Himself: "I am He that blot out thy iniquities" (Is. xliii. 25). Let us compare them with the words which we speak to our penitents: "I absolve thee," and

we shall find that our power is indeed divine. All the more is this true, in that it is exercised on the mystical Body of Christ, and that, in exercising it, we have to render account to none but God.

2. *They are forgiven them.* The remission of sins is a matter exceeding in importance anything in the world, as it concerns the salvation of the whole human race; for "all we like sheep have gone astray; every one hath turned aside into his own way" (Is. liii. 6). And the one remedy for the evil of sin is found in the Sacrament of Penance, by means of which it comes to pass that "the snare is broken and we are delivered" (Ps. cxxiii. 7). Again, the remission of sins is the fruit of all the labours of the Son of God; of His Passion, and of His Death; and thus He gave this power to the Apostles after He had consummated the work committed to Him by His Father. "This is all the fruit, that the sin thereof should be taken away" (Is. xxvii. 9). Surely, then, there can be no more important affair than this forgiveness, which the world now values at nothing, but which men will value in hell, when it will be too late to obtain it; for the Blood of Jesus Christ cannot descend thither: in hell there is no redemption. But let us, at least, who are not of this world, value it aright, considering how salutary it is both to the sinner, who by its means recovers life, and also to the just, who by it obtains augmentation of grace and glory (as St. Bernard says). Many souls, who are now in heaven, have walked by this road, and by it will many more travel, even to the end of the world. How salutary is the Ministry of the Confessor! The tongue of dogs, by licking wounds, cures them; and holy teachers, who, in confession, instruct us in regard to our sins, touch, as it were, the wounds of our soul with their tongue (says St. Gregory).

3. *They are retained.* Let not confessors suppose that they will meet with few difficulties in regard to retaining sins when they cannot be absolved, or absolving when they should not be retained; nor that they will be able to overcome these difficulties in their own strength. It is no easy matter to judge of the human heart, to weigh sins, to examine the dispositions of men: "The heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable; who can

know it" (Jer. xvii. 9)? It is no easy matter to draw forth from this heart the serpent of sin: "His obstetric hand brought forth the winding serpent" (Job xxvi. 13); it is no easy matter to possess the art of arts necessary to regulate consciences; it is no easy matter to unite sanctity, learning, and prudence—the qualities to be combined in a good Confessor. God alone can make easy that which is difficult, for He can form fit Ministers of the New Testament, and "with Him nothing is impossible." Let us ask His help, let us humble ourselves in His presence, let us place in Him our full trust and confidence.

"Direct me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art God my Saviour."—*Ps.* xxiv. 5.

"Lord of mercy . . . Thou hast chosen me . . . to be a judge of Thy sons and daughters."—*Wisdom* ix. 1—7.

THURSDAY.

THE ECCLESIASTIC WHO LOSES FAITH.

I. EXAMPLES OF THIS MISFORTUNE.
II. CAUSES FROM WHICH IT PROCEEDS.
III. SINS WHICH RESULT FROM IT.

"Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him: We have seen the Lord. But he said to them: Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."—*St. John* xx. 24, 25.

1. *I will not believe.* St. Thomas fell into unbelief, although he had for several years been instructed in the Faith, and had been consecrated to the Priesthood, by our Lord Himself. Nicholas, who

was ordained by the Apostles Deacon of the infant Church, also fell into unbelief, as St. Irenæus, St. Epiphanius, and others relate. And in the first years of Christianity many Bishops and Priests, who had perhaps been consecrated by the Apostles, did the same. Of this number were Hymeneus and Alexander, Phigellus and Hermogenes (1 Tim. i. 20; 2 Tim. i. 15). In reading Ecclesiastical history, and running through the catalogue of heresiarchs and their first abettors, we may perceive that almost all of them sprang from the bosom of the Sanctuary: "Of your own selves," said St. Paul to the Priests of Ephesus, "shall arise men speaking perverse things" (Acts xx. 29). And have not we ourselves seen Priests fall, like Lucifer, from the glorious Heaven of the Church, where they shone as bright stars, into the abyss of apostasy; living, speaking, writing, as heretics, and giving their name shamelessly to secret Societies condemned by the Church? "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning!" (Is. xiv. 12). Who will not fear, when he reflects that great pillars of the Church, such as Origen and Tertullian, have wavered and fallen? And shall not we also fear to lose the great treasure of the Faith, "without which it is impossible to please God"? (Heb. xi. 6). The fall of these great Ecclesiastics should keep us in fear, in humility, in watchfulness. Let the downfall of our great predecessors be a caution to us in the way of humility (says St. Gregory). Who knows if God may not threaten to take from some of us the light of Faith if we amend not? "I will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou do penance" (Apoc. ii. 5).

2. *Was not with them.* Thomas was not with his colleagues when Jesus appeared to them, and his self-love was so much hurt by this circumstance that it caused him obstinately to oppose the belief of his brethren. A precisely similar cause—viz., pride and vainglory,—has made many Ecclesiastics fall into heresy; for vainglory (says St. Gregory) is the origin of presumptuous novelties of doctrine. Proud men desire to make show of their learning, their wit, or their eloquence; and when they see their error, they will not retract, nor humble themselves under the authority of the Church. In their rage against their Holy

Mother they collect together a company of followers whom they seduce; "drawing away disciples after them." Hence are they all puffed up with presumption (says Tertullian). To this cause we may add another, and that is covetousness: "The desire of money is the root of all evil, which some coveting, have erred from the faith" (1 Tim. vi. 10). Hence St. Thomas teaches that heresies spring either from pride or from covetousness. This covetousness is not always the desire of money, but also of worldly and sensual pleasures; for through both we may injure our conscience, and make "shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. i. 19). Let us be careful lest the fire of covetousness be kindled in us, and prevent us from beholding the sun of revealed truth: "fire hath fallen on them, and they shall not see the sun" (Ps. lvii. 9).

3. *Except I shall see, &c.* St. Thomas was guilty of many sins in this one act; for he sinned by unbelief, obstinacy, pride, disrespect towards his colleagues, presumption, and long-continued stubbornness. But his sin produced no fatal consequences; on the contrary, it tended, through a merciful dispensation of Divine Providence (as St. Gregory points out), to confirm us in the Faith. But it is not so when Priests fall into infidelity; they are like a stone thrown from a mountain, which brings many more rolling down with it. The speech of these unhappy Priests is like a canker, spreading and eating into a part of the mystical Body of Christ: "their speech spreadeth like a canker" (2 Tim. ii. 17); and, if they be not repressed, they become like a spark of fire, which kindles an immense conflagration. Arius in Alexandria was but as a spark (says St. Jerome), but because that spark was not immediately extinguished, the flame it kindled spread over the whole world. How fatal, then, in its consequences is the sin of unbelief! What will its punishment be in Hell? What a miserable appearance will those who fall into it present at the day of judgment before God, Whom they have betrayed, and before the innumerable souls whom they have deceived! Therefore, let us jealously guard the treasure of faith; let us keep firmly attached to the Church and to Her supreme Head; let us fly profane novelties, whence spring heresy, and under which heresy hides itself: "avoiding profane novelties" (1 Tim.

vi. 20). Let us ever keep before us the warning of St. Jerome against admitting any strange doctrine, however skilfully and ingeniously framed it may appear to us. Let us implore the mercy of God on all Priests who have been themselves deceived, or who have deceived others; let us implore it for ourselves; for without Divine aid we might even fall into greater evils.

"Blessed is the man who . . . hath not sat in the chair of pestilence."—*Ps.* i. 1.

"The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers, and not leave us, nor cast us off."—3 *Kings* viii. 57.

FRIDAY.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. THOMAS.

I. THE METHOD OF ST. THOMAS'S CONVERSION.
II. THE CONVERSION OF FALLEN PRIESTS.
III. THE CAUSES WHICH HINDER THEIR CONVERSION.

"And after eight days, again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: Peace be unto you. Then He saith to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered, and said to Him: My Lord and my God. Jesus saith to him: Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."—*St. John* xx. 26—29.

1. *Put in thy finger hither.* Thomas was a wandering sheep; the Good Shepherd seeks him and saves him: this disciple had a mortal wound in his heart; the heavenly Physician cures it by showing him His own wounds. Let us (with St. Chrysostom) consider our Lord's clemency, Who does so much to save the

soul of His Priest; for with this intent He performed in one moment seven operations. In the first place, He appeared, expressly in order to drive away His disciple's unbelief; in the second place, He manifested a miracle of knowledge, by showing that He was invisibly present when Thomas spoke to his colleagues the words of unbelief; further, He performed a miracle of power in rendering His glorified Body sensible to St. Thomas's touch; next, He gives him this paternal admonition: "Be not faithless, but believing." Afterwards, He adds a reproof: "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed." Again, He caused him to put his finger in the wounds of His hands, and his hand into the wound of His side (as St. Cyril, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, and Venerable Bede teach). Lastly, Jesus performed an interior divine operation, by infusing faith into Thomas, and bestowing on him the gift of repentance; drawing from his lips words which express both the one and the other: "My Lord and my God." What hast Thou not done, O Jesus, for the conversion of a Priest? Abandon not others who may be in the like sin; let Thy grace touch their heart also!

2. *My Lord and my God.* St. Thomas, in uttering these words, acknowledged the Divinity and the Humanity of Jesus (says St. Bonaventure). He Himself, as God and Man, does much for the conversion of sinful Priests; for He is always, and for all, "the propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 2). Jesus Christ raised the daughter of Jairus as if awaking her from sleep; He raised the son of the widow of Nain with only a few ceremonies. But when He raised Lazarus, who had been dead four days, He groaned in spirit, and wept, and prayed to His Father; and this, in order to show us that, the longer the state of spiritual death, and the more inveterate the habit of sin, the more difficult and rare is conversion (as St. Augustine points out). So did He likewise act in regard to His Apostles; for, in order to convert Peter, after his recent fall, He made use of a glance only: "the Lord turning, looked on Peter" (St. Luke xxii. 61); whereas, to convert Thomas, who had persisted eight days in his evil habit, He in His mercy does far more: He rebukes, He reproaches, He instructs (says St. Chrysostom). The same does He to obstinate Priests; for He

rebukes them by many lessons of Holy Scripture, by preaching, by interior illuminations, by many inward calls; He reproaches them by remorse of conscience, by the reproofs which they themselves administer to the people, by the memory of benefits received, and of promises made to God. He instructs them by the example of good Priests, by the spectacle of the unhappy end of the wicked, by the admonitions of Superiors. It is true (as St. Jerome suggests) that few pray for sinful Priests, but Jesus ever intercedes for them: "always living to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25). Therefore, let them not despair of pardon; let them not listen to Jansenists, who exaggerate the difficulties of conversion; let them not imitate Judas, whom St. Leo calls a man beyond the reach of conversion—a spirit going forth to evil and not returning. They will find Jesus as merciful to them as He was to Peter and Thomas.

3. *Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.* We ourselves are designated by these words, because, without having seen Jesus, we believe in Him. And we are truly blessed; for Faith shows us, in the bosom of the Church, the fountain of salvation for the cleansing of our souls; it offers us the Blood of Christ in the Sacrament of Penance, for washing away all our sins. It is not more difficult for a Priest than for other men to obtain pardon for his offences, nor should we say to such an one what Heli said to his sons Ophni and Phinees, when he reproved them, being Priests: "If one man shall sin against another, God may be appeased in his behalf; but if a man shall sin against the Lord, who shall pray for him?" (1 Kings ii. 5). We have a remedy for all evils; even enormous sacrileges will be forgiven by means of a good Confession. Therefore our perdition will be on our own head, if through negligence, shame, or procrastination, we have not recourse to the only plank by which we can be saved from shipwreck. Almighty God's promise of pardon to "a contrite and humble heart" certainly does not exclude Priests; why then do some among them persist in their obstinacy or despair? Do they expect an extraordinary call, like that of St. Thomas? But our Lord sees no need of a miracle in their case, nor are they deserving of so much compassion as that disciple, who had been

as it were, stunned by the spectacle of the Passion, who was of rude understanding, and yet destined to convert the world. Let us have recourse to our Saviour, let us wash ourselves in His Blood, and we shall be blessed: "Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb" (Apoc. xxii. 14).

"I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost: seek Thy servant, because I have not forgotten Thy commandments."—*Ps.* cxviii. 176.

"My Lord and my God."—*St. John* xx. 28.

SATURDAY.

SPECIAL DEVOTION DUE FROM THE CLERGY TO MARY, UNDER THE TITLE OF MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL.

I. HOMAGE.
II. THANKSGIVING.
III. INVOCATION.

"He that is mighty hath done great things to me."—*St. Luke* i. 49.

1. One of the *great things* which the Almighty did to Mary, was to render Her worthy of special homage, as "the Mother of good counsel." Let us meditate how this title becomes Her, whether we consider God in Her, or Her in God, or whether we consider the Faithful, who approach God through Her intercession. Under the first head, we observe that Almighty God, by especial Counsel, chose Her, promised Her, overshadowed Her, disposed Her, made Her Mother of the Word; and therefore is She called by St. Ildephonsus, "the Counsel of the Word." She is also called "the hidden Counsel of the Wisdom of the Father." In Her

was effected the great Counsel of the Incarnation. From Her came forth into the world "the Counsellor," or rather "the Angel of great Counsel,"—that is, Jesus, Who (says St. Thomas), as "Leader and Master of the nations," had "Counsel without doubting," and Who was the Author, not only of precepts, but also of counsels. In the second place, She, Who was wholly possessed by the Holy Spirit, and was His Spouse, was filled with the gift of Counsel, and gave admirable proofs of it in Her whole life; as we may consider in all that is related of Her in the Gospels. And because (says St. Thomas) the gift of Counsel directs us in all that regards eternal life, whether of precept or of counsel, She, in the fulfilment of precepts and counsels, had that gift for Her guide, ever aimed at eternal life, ever "chose the best part." Again, there is great need of Counsel when matters are grave and indeterminate, and when duties are in question, which clash and can scarcely be reconciled. Now, Mary was placed in a position of grave and singular trial; being Herself a creature, and at the same time the Mother of the Word, Who was infinitely above Her, and would yet be "subject" to Her; so that She had to preserve the inferiority of the creature, whilst exercising the authority of Mother. Under the third head, She says to each one of the Faithful, as Rebecca said to Jacob, in order that he might obtain the blessing: "My son, follow my counsel" (Gen. xxvii. 8); and She continues: "I, Wisdom, dwell in counsel . . . Counsel . . . is mine" (Prov. viii. 12, 14). In short, by Her example, by Her Son's words, by the inspirations which She obtains for us from Her Spouse, She continually gives us the Counsel which saves us: "Counsel shall keep thee" (Prov. ii. 11). Hence She is called by Albertus Magnus, "the universal Counsellor," and by St. Bonaventure, "the Counsellor of the ignorant," by St. Anselm, "our Counsellor in our necessities." For all these reasons does Mary merit our homage under this title, and She merits it especially from the Clergy, who are able better than others so to consider Her.

2. Justly did the Virgin say: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me;" for, among other prerogatives, He gave Her that of being the channel of all grace: He placed the plenitude of

all good in Mary (says St. Bernard); and therefore, whatever hope, whatever grace, whatever salvation is in us, flows to us through Her. Hence, from Her hands, and by Her intercession, we received, even in our tender years, innumerable good counsels, which were hidden from the wise and prudent of this world: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (St. Matt. xi. 25). We had recourse to Her when tempted by suggestions of the Evil one, so that we might not be deceived by the old serpent; and She gave us good counsel, which was a source of life, in order that we might escape his snares. "Her counsel is as a fountain of life" (Eccl. xi. 16). We had recourse to Her maternal heart in doubts, in scruples, in dangers; and She said to our heart: "Give ear, my son, and take wise counsel, and cast not away my advice" (Eccl. vi. 24). We had recourse in an especial manner to Her patronage, to determine our vocation to the Priesthood, and to follow it. Then were there doubts to be removed, means to be discovered, obstacles to be surmounted; and She obtained for us from God the three gifts which constitute good Counsel, and which are (according to St. Thomas) a right end, a good means, and a favourable opportunity. And shall we be unmindful of these benefits? shall we not profit by this Festival to thank the Mother of good Counsel? Shall we be like the ungrateful man who abandons his deliverer? "An unthankful mind will leave him that delivered him" (Eccl. xxix. 21).

3. If Almighty God did "great things" to Mary, He did them in order to render Her worthy not only to be the Mother of the Word, but also to be the Mother of His people, who, among other necessities, have need of good counsel; and, among the Faithful, Priests need in greater abundance the gift of Counsel. They are exposed to grave and frequent adversity; and St. Augustine teaches that in adversity is specially experienced the need of Counsel. Moreover, Counsel (as St. Thomas observes) is passive and active: the first is a gift found in all who are living in the grace of God, the second is a grace, "*gratis data*," by which those who are in doubt are directed aright. Now Priests ought to live in grace and to be guided by good counsel, and espe-

cially in exercising the works of mercy. But they must also give counsel to the Faithful, who need direction for their conscience, and are ready to follow the teaching of the Wise Man: "My son, do thou nothing without counsel" (Eccl. xxxii. 24); and therefore have they special need of Mary's assistance. If thou hadst always invoked Her, thou wouldst have become "a man of counsel" (1 Mach. ii. 65), "one of a thousand" (Eccl. vi. 6). If thou hadst always invoked Her, never wouldst thou have given "wicked counsel" (Ezech. xi. 2). May I grieve for this my fault, and, for the future, by God's help may I follow the instruction of St. Bernard: "In doubtful matters think on Mary, invoke Mary: if you think on Her, you will not go astray."

"Mother of good counsel, confirm all my counsels."—From *Ps.* xix. 6.
"Direct my counsel and knowledge."—From *Eccl.* xxxix. 10.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JESUS CHRIST THE SHEPHERD OF SHEPHERDS.

I. He feeds them with His word.
II. With His example.
III. With His help.

"I am the Good Shepherd."—*St. John* x. 11.

1. In saying "*I am the Good Shepherd*," Jesus Christ shewed His modesty; for He said infinitely less than He might have said. He might justly have said: "I am the sole Shepherd" promised by My Father: "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He

shall feed them" (Ezech. xxxiv. 23). He might have justly said: "I am the Prince of shepherds, the Prince of pastors" (1 Pet. v. 4). And, in truth, with His precious Blood has He purchased as His sheep those whom He has set to feed His other sheep, communicating to them also the title of Shepherds. Nay, He feeds them with a special care, giving them all spiritual nourishment in greater abundance; and St. Thomas speaks of them as feeding the flock by word, by example, by help. Let us consider, therefore, how Jesus Christ feeds Priests with His Word. Which of us can remember unmoved the numberless words which Jesus Christ has caused us to hear in the course of our life? Surely we should have been like sheep without a Shepherd, had He not gathered us together and fed us: "You were as sheep going astray; but you are now converted to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Pet. ii. 25). How many catechisms, how many sermons, how many exhortations and reproofs, has He not caused us to hear by means of His Ministers, by means of our Superiors? Truly He "teacheth and correcteth as a shepherd doth his flock" (Eccl. xviii. 13). During the years which we consecrated to the study of Ecclesiastical science, did He not give us "the water of wholesome wisdom to drink" (Eccl. xv. 3)? And have we not found in Meditation, when He has spoken in the solitude of our heart, an abundant, ever fresh, and rich pasture, raised, as God promised, "in the high mountains, where we might rest on the green grass and be fed in fat pastures" (Eccl. xxxiv. 14)? What will be our guilt and our punishment, if we feed not in these pastures, if we are not docile to the voice of our Shepherd? Let us remember His words: "If I had not come and spoken to them they would not have sin... but now they have no excuse for their sin" (St. John xv. 22).

2. The "*Good Shepherd*," our Saviour teaches, goes before His sheep, and they follow Him: "He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him" (St. John x. 4). Thus does He in a special manner feed Priests with His example, and from them He requires a more exact following: "Come ye after Me" (St. Matt. iv. 19); "Follow Me" (ix. 9); "If any man minister to Me, let *him* follow Me" (St. John xii. 26). He shews them His example

more frequently, more closely, more clearly, in the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist which they daily celebrate. And, not content with this, He shews them continually in the lives of the Saints examples of those who have followed their Shepherd, each one of whom can say with St. Paul: "Be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. iv. 16). These have been engaged sometimes in interior contemplation, sometimes in the exterior duties of the active life. Going from one to the other, they have found pasture in each; and thus does St. Augustine apply the words: "They shall go in and out and find pasture." To the examples of the Saints, who are already reigning with God, may be added the examples of good Priests, the ornament of the Church militant, who, whilst they visibly feed the sheep, are themselves fed by the invisible Shepherd, and follow His steps. "Observe them who walk so as you have our model," said the Apostle (Phil. iii. 17). How many excellent ministers of the New Testament has not God made known to us, since we first entered the Ecclesiastical state! Their teaching, gravity, modesty, devotion, disinterestedness—above all, their ardent zeal—should have been a mirror and pattern to us. We should long ago have been wise and prudent, had we followed the track of these good sheep of our Lord Jesus. God never deserts His Church (says St. Thomas); for in every country are found suitable Ministers sufficient for the wants of the people. And is it not a great disgrace and a great crime (asks St. Gregory), not to be good among the good? Can it be that we have hitherto followed the lax, the tepid, the slothful, the unworthy: "Be not emulous of evildoers, nor envy them that work iniquity" (Ps. xxxvi. 1)?

3. *I am the Good Shepherd*, repeated Jesus; and that, because He nourishes us with His support. He has nourished us with temporal assistance, bringing us even to our present age without suffering us to want anything that was necessary for us; so that He can say to us as He said to His Apostles: "Did you want anything?" (St. Luke xxii. 35). But far more has He nourished us with spiritual aid; that is, with habitual and actual grace, with the Sacraments, and, above all, with the Holy Eucharist, to which He specially referred when He called Himself the

Shepherd. For it is by reason of this Food which He gives us that He most justly merits that title. Other shepherds nourish themselves with the milk of their flocks, whereas He feeds us with His own Blood. What shepherd (asks St. Chrysostom) has ever nourished his flock with his own blood? And it is Priests who feed most frequently on the Flesh and Blood of this Shepherd; they are the first to eat of It, He hath fed them with It "from their youth until this day" (Gen. xlviii. 15). Let us pray to Him, that, as He is the sole Shepherd, Who is Lord of the fold, Lord of the pastures, having perfect knowledge of our necessities and of our evils, so would He ever regard us as "the sheep of His pasture" (Ps. xciv. 7). Let us pray to Him, to keep us ever among His sheep, to guard us from wolves, and to preserve us ever among those to whom He has said: "I give them life everlasting, and they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of My hand" (St. John x. 28).

"The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing; He hath set me in a place of pasture."—*Ps.* xxii. 2.

"I am not troubled, following Thee for my pastor."—*Jer.* xvii. 16.

MONDAY.

THE CARE OF SOULS A FORMIDABLE CHARGE.

I. IT IMPOSES GRAVE DUTIES.
II. IT RENDERS US LIABLE TO A TERRIBLE JUDGMENT.
III. IT OFFERS IMMENSE REWARD.

"The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep."—*St. John* x. 11.

1. *The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.* In these few words our Lord sums up all the duties of those who have the care of souls; proposing Himself (as St. Gregory says) for our model. For if a man is bound to sacrifice his life, far more is he bound to risk the loss of other less precious goods, such as riches, pleasures, and repose. Most true are the words of St. Larwence Justinian, that the ruling of souls is a great burden, a business of much watchfulness, and a fearful ministry. Prelates expose themselves really to a continual martyrdom; they must (as St. Chrysostom says) be vigilant and fervent in spirit; they must be careful and concerned for all; they must labour and attend upon their duty by day and by night, even more than a general upon his army. They must make themselves all things to all men, and this in itself is a sufficiently heavy burden. "I see nothing so burdensome as this, in the office of a Priest" (said St. Gregory the Great in speaking of this duty). They must excel in the contemplative life (says St. Thomas), in order that they may readily succeed in the active life; they must, in short, unite all those virtues and offices which St. Paul, with the words "it behoveth," imposes on Timothy (1 iii. 2), and on Titus (i. 7). How formid-

able, then, is this charge, which the Council of Trent declares would cause even the shoulders of angels to tremble! Is it not folly for any one to think himself worthy of it? Justly does St. Augustine speak of the impropriety of eagerly grasping at such an exalted position, involving, as it does, so tremendous a responsibility.

2. If "the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep," he does so because he is obliged to give account of them in the day of judgment; "they watch, as being to render an account of your souls" (Heb. xiii. 17). Now, to render account of souls signifies, to render account of all the sins which have been committed through our carelessness or imprudence. Hence (as St. Lawrence Justinian observes) a negligent pastor, however holy he may have been in his private life, will find himself in the Judgment guilty of innumerable crimes. Further, to render an account of souls signifies to justify ourselves at God's tribunal in respect of each individual soul,—to shew that we have omitted nothing that we could have done to rescue from perdition all those entrusted to us. Now, if every individual among the Faithful trembles at the thought of the Judgment, in which he must give account of himself, how shall not he fear who must render account of other men's souls and of other men's sins (says St. Chrysostom)? He who trembles not at such considerations, and rashly undertakes the care of souls, either (says St. Prosper) is without understanding, or he believes not in a future life. Justly have Saints refused to bow their shoulders to this burthen, or at least have taken it up with fear and trembling. Let us pray to our Lord Jesus Christ to inspire us with such sentiments of the Saints, and to make us correspond with these precious inspirations.

3. *The good shepherd*, who has been ready "to give his life for his sheep,"—who by express obedience, or mature counsel, has recognised the divine call to this office, and fulfils all its duties,—will undoubtedly receive immense reward from the Prince of Pastors. If you are good shepherds (says St. Bernard), rejoice; for your reward is very great in heaven. For he who thinks only of himself does well, but he who thinks of many and aids many does better and more manfully. Almighty God is incomparably more generous in rewarding than He is severe in punishing; and,

if He punishes the negligent Pastor with rigour, how highly will He not reward the Pastor who has been useful to the flock? He knows his sorrows, his labours, and all the good they have effected, and He will reward them as a most munificent Lord, saying to him, "I know thy works . . hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Apoc. iii. 8, 11). If such a pastor is not easily found, the more precious is he, and the more eagerly to be sought. Let us beg of God most abundant grace for all the Pastors of His Church, whom St. Bernard calls senators of the whole world; and, for ourselves, let us pray that we may never be ambitious of so perilous a dignity.

"Rule them and exalt them for ever."—*Ps.* xxvii. 9.

"O Lord, trust me not in a rugged way, nor set a stumbling block to my soul."—From *Eccl.* xxxii. 25.

TUESDAY.

THE CONDITION OF THE HIRELING.

I. THE TITLE OF HIRELING EASILY MERITED.

II. THE DIFFICULTY OF DISTINGUISHING THE HIRELING FROM THE TRUE SHEPHERD.

III. THE TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT OF THE HIRELING.

"But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth. . . . . And the hireling flieth because he is a hireling, and he hath no care for the sheep."—*St. John* x. 12, 13.

1. *The hireling.* Three times does our Lord repeat the odious word, "Hireling"; for threefold are the goods which the world offers to its followers, and attachment to any one of these suffices to

constitute a hireling. These three worldly goods are, pleasures, riches, honours: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16); and he is a hireling (says St. Gregory) who is influenced by any one of these motives in feeding the flock. Now, it is easy enough to find ministers of God who are urged by such motives to undertake the care of souls. St. Paul, even in his days, complained of such as these: "All seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. ii. 21); and therefore St. Augustine frankly declared that in the Church there were many hirelings, both among Prelates and Priests. How easy is it for a Priest, being a child of Adam, and therefore taken from the earth, to desire and obtain Ecclesiastical offices for one of these ends! How easy to deserve the reproach of being a hireling in God's sight, even after a lawful vocation, and after dedicating himself to an exemplary and laborious life! In order to avoid so opprobrious a name, a Priest should have such love of God and of his flock (says St. Augustine) as to overcome the natural fear of death. Is this an easy thing to find? Are not many prayers, supreme detachment, great perfection, and continual exercise in all virtues, needed to obtain it?

2. *The hireling flieth.* The only means of distinguishing the hireling from the shepherd, is by observing whether he flieth at the coming of the wolf. It is only on such an occasion (says St. Gregory) that we can discern between them. The flight of the hireling is not only in persecution, nor is it always a bodily flight, but more commonly a flight of the soul, an escape from the fulfilment of duty (as St. Augustine points out)—as, for instance, when a sinner should be corrected, and the hireling shrinks from the task for fear of losing some temporal advantage. It may consist in a pernicious silence; for (says St. Gregory) he flieth, who beholds injustice and is silent: he flieth, who concealeth himself under silence. At other times, it consists (as St. Bernard shews) in turning away from justice, from the defence of the Church, from the liberation of his country, from the protection of widows and orphans. Such flight unmasks the hireling, who has

appeared as a shepherd; for it is the natural effect of the condition of a hireling. He is distinguished from the shepherd (says St. Thomas) not only in regard to his acts, but also in regard to his intention and his solicitude. Let every one, then, who has the charge of souls, seriously examine his own heart in respect of his intention, and let him see whether that intention be to feed the flock or to benefit himself: "Should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds?" (Ezech. xxxiv. 2). And, in regard to solicitude, let him enquire whether he have love and care for the fold; whether he can say: "I have you in my heart and in my hands" (Phil. i. 7). The flock can only recognise the hireling when some critical occasion arises, and when he is discovered in his flight; but the hireling may always recognise himself, by thus examining his intention and solicitude. At the feet of his crucifix, then, let him search and judge himself. What aim has he in his labours? What are the impulses of his heart? To what are they directed? Does he look to his own convenience, or to the eternal welfare of his people? What, and to what end, are his efforts? How important a subject of examination is this, both for Bishops and Priests! How sad will be the position of many among them before the Tribunal of the Prince of Pastors!

3. *Because he is a hireling.* He flieth, because he is a hireling, and for the same reason will he be excluded from Paradise. For that is the paternal inheritance (says St. Augustine) which will be given to sons, who expect it patiently;—not the vile wages given to the hireling, who is in haste to grasp his temporal rewards. For Almighty God, Who searches the depth of the heart, sees that he is seeking other things, rather than God, in the Church; and the Lord "is good to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lam. iii. 25), but to him who seeks earthly goods, He will say: "'Take what is thine, and go thy way' (St. Matt. xx. 14); thou didst desire temporal reward for thy portion; this was thine, already hast thou received it." "They have received their reward" (St. Matt. vi. 5). Woe, therefore, "to the pastors that destroy and tear the sheep of my pasture" (Jerem. xxiii. 1)! Hirelings in the Church are as fatted calves: "Her hirelings also that lived in the midst of her like fatted calves" (Jerem. xlvi. 19), and hence they will be sacri-

ficed to divine justice in the day of their death: "Gather them together as sheep for a sacrifice, and prepare them for the day of slaughter" (Jer. xii. 3). Let us meditate on these terrible truths, and whatever may be our portion in the pasture of Christ's sheep, let us seek to purify our intention, to detach our heart from the love of reward,—not to fly at sight of the wolf, but to "feed the flock of God; taking care of it, not by constraint but willingly, according to God; not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily" (1 Pet. v. 2).

"I shall keep myself from my iniquity, and the Lord will reward me according to my justice."—*Ps.* xvii. 24, 25.

"Reward them that patiently wait for Thee, that Thy prophets may be found faithful."—*Eccles.* xxxvi. 18.

WEDNESDAY.

THE PRIEST WHO GIVES SCANDAL, THE WOLF OF THE FOLD.

I. HE STRANGLES THE SHEEP.
II. HE CATCHES THEM.
III. HE SCATTERS THEM.

"The wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep."—*St. John* x. 12.

1. *The wolf.* The wolf (says St. Ambrose) in seizing his prey, strangles the sheep, so as to deprive them of voice. Now, St. Thomas says that this wolf represents the Devil, the Heretic, or the Persecutor. Each one of these enemies seeks to close the mouths of Christians from uttering the profession of their faith, the prayers of the Church, and the praises of God. Yet we do not

easily perceive that the wicked Priest is also a wolf; although such indeed he is. He strangles the sheep; for when they see sin committed by their Pastor, they no longer call it detestable; nay (as St. Gregory says) they are persuaded that they may lawfully indulge in the same themselves. Many of the laity, practically, cease to profess Christian morality, and live as infidels, because of the evil life which they sometimes witness in Ecclesiastics. The laity live evilly when they see clerics live evilly (says St. Augustine). Scarcely any will think that unlawful (says St. Ambrose) which superiors practise as though it were lawful. Who can weep as he ought for the ruin thus brought upon Christ's flock? Who will give fountains of tears to our eyes, to deplore the misery of so many Christians, who think it lawful to follow the example of wicked Ecclesiastics? Let us at least mourn over those Priests who are insensible to the fatal evils which they thus cause.

2. *Catcheth.* "To catch" means to take that which is not his own, to snatch away the sheep whom Christ has purchased with His Blood; and it is a most grievous spectacle to see in this rapine the work of those whom Christ appointed Princes and Judges over His faithful people. "Her princes in the midst of her are like wolves ravening the prey . . . . . to destroy souls" (Ezech. xxii. 27); "her judges are evening wolves" (Sophon. iii. 3). Justly does Almighty God complain that His "sheep are become a prey" (Eccl. xxxiv. 8). Now the Priest is not only Prince and Judge, but also Father, of the Faithful, who so often salute him as "Father;" and this unnatural father has no compassion on his children: "he is hardened against his young ones, as though they were not his" (Job xxxix. 16); he snatches them from the side of Jesus, he places them in a state of spiritual death, he makes them slaves of the devil, and, if they have not the gift of repentance, he drags them from Paradise to cast them into hell. Not only will they die (says St. Gregory) because of the evil which they themselves commit, but they are also guilty of the souls of others, whom they have destroyed by their wicked example. Are these shepherds, or are they wolves? Could the infernal Wolf, who seeks to draw souls to hell, do worse than this? Justly does St.

Augustine declare that the sheep are killed by wicked Pastors; that is to say, by their example and by their evil lives. Let us meditate on the injuries thus suffered by the sheep, and let us endeavour to repair them as far as we can. Let us pray to the Lamb of God, the Shepherd of our souls, to change these wolves into lambs, and not to suffer them to ravage His flock.

3. *And scattereth the sheep.* This scattering (says St. Thomas) consists in some sheep allowing themselves to be seduced while others stand fast. Almighty God complains of this scattering by His Prophet: "My sheep were scattered . . . . . they became the prey of all the beasts of the field, and were scattered" (Ezech. xxxiv. 5). Many follow the fleeting pleasures of the world, and they who should lead them back fail to do so: "My flocks were scattered upon the face of the earth, and there was none that sought them" (*ibid.* 6). Nay, the very shepherds themselves contribute to this scattering, by causing their flocks to follow divers passions, to walk in ways which are not good, to tread the paths of vice: "My people hath been a lost flock, their shepherds have caused them to go astray" (Jer. l. 6). If the Pastor fall (says St. Gregory) he drags the sheep with him over the precipice. Sometimes his neglect in gathering together the sheep suffices to scatter them; and thus mere sins of omission in Pastors may cause the ruin of souls: "He that gathereth not with Me, scattereth" (St. Luke xi. 23). Let us examine our conscience at the feet of our Chief Pastor; if it rebuke us in this particular, let us repair the evil; if we are free from remorse on this head, let us thank Him, and pray to Him to deliver us from so great evil.

"Conduct, O Lord, Thy people, like sheep."—From *Ps.* lxxvi. 21.

"Visit Thy sheep, and deliver them out of all the places where they have been scattered."—From *Ezech.* xxxiv. 12.

THURSDAY.

THE OFFICE OF PRIESTS IN RELATION TO THEIR BISHOPS IN THE FOLD OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. THEY ARE SHEPHERDS, ASSISTING THE BISHOP.
II. THEY ARE WATCH-DOGS, AS WARNING THE BISHOP.
III. THEY ARE SHEEP, AS FOLLOWING THE BISHOP.

"I am the Good Shepherd, and I know Mine, and Mine know Me."—*St. John* x. 14.

1. *I am the Good Shepherd.* All the shepherds of God's people are members of One only Shepherd (says St. Augustine). Simple priests are also shepherds, inasmuch as they are associated into the Priesthood of Jesus Christ, and inasmuch as they are the arms and the eye of the Bishop. Thus, it was not only to Bishops, but also to Presbyters, that St. Peter wrote: "Feed the flock of God which is committed to you" (1 Pet. v. 2); and St. Paul, when he said, "Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock" (Acts xx. 28), had before him "the ancients of the Church," that is, Bishops and Priests: "He called together the Bishops and Presbyters from Ephesus" (says St. Irenæus), "and brought them to a neighbouring city." Let us, then, feed that portion of the flock which the Bishop confides to us;—let us feed it with our mind, by praying for it; let us feed it with our mouth, by exhorting it to lead a good life; let us feed it with our works, by giving it a good example. So St. Bernard. The Holy Spirit gives us the model of a good shepherd in those words of Jacob: "Day and night was I parched with heat and with frost, and

sleep departed from my eyes" (Gen. xxxi. 40). Now, if we carefully weigh these words, we shall understand that three things are required in him who would feed souls well; that is to say, assiduity, patience, and solicitude (as St. Thomas remarks). Let us, above all, feed our flock with the holy Sacraments, for they are the true nourishment of souls. Let us be careful not to deserve the reproofs which Almighty God gives to wicked shepherds: "The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed, that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again, neither have you sought that which was lost, but you ruled over them with rigour and with a high hand" (Ezech. xxxiv. 4).

2. *I know Mine.* The sheep must be kept in the fold, if the Shepherd is to know them; and they will be kept in it, if the dogs warn the Shepherd of the coming of the wolf and the thief, and if they aid him in driving them away: "With the dogs of my flock" (Job xxx. 1). Dogs (says Cornelius à Lapide) are useful in giving notice of the thief by their bark. The presence of a zealous and learned Ecclesiastic instils fear into heretics and evil livers; the plots of the one and the disorders of the other are readily discovered, denounced in the proper quarter, and restrained. Further, the Clergy should be faithful to their Bishop, as dogs are faithful to their master; they should accompany him in his undertakings, take part in his sorrows and in his joys. "The dog followed him" (Tobias vi. 1); "the dog which had been with them in the way, ran before, and coming as if he had brought the news, shewed his joy by his fawning and wagging his tail" (xi. 9). And all this they will do if they detach themselves from earthly things, and only take so much of them as is necessary to live: "They that shall lap the water with their tongues, as dogs are wont to lap" (Judges vii. 5). Thus, too, will they become as dogs who lick the wounds of Lazarus; that is, with their tongues they will cure the infirmities of the Faithful: "The dogs came and licked his sores" (St. Luke xvi. 21). Let us attend carefully to the fulfilment of these great duties; let us fear lest we become dogs in another sense—"dumb dogs, not

able to bark" (Isa. lvi. 10)—not raising our voice when we see the danger of the flock—"impudent dogs, that never have enough" (lvi. 11), never content with the benefits which we receive from our own Pastor;—"dogs which tear" (Jer. xv. 3) his good fame;—biting dogs, who censure all his actions, instead of co-operating with them; like those of whom St. Paul speaks: "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers" (Phil. iii. 2);—dead dogs, who are good for nothing: "Shouldst thou look upon such a dead dog" (2 Kings ix. 8);—dogs who devour the substance of Christ's Mystical Body: "Many dogs have encompassed Me" (Ps. xxi. 17).

3. *And Mine know Me.* Priests should know their own Prelate in the same way that the sheep know their own shepherd, and should have such veneration for him, as to justify him in saying: "All shall know me, from the least of them even to the greatest" (Jer. xxxi. 34). They must recognise his authority to command, they must obey his orders, and must depend on his directions, as soldiers do on their captains (says St. Gregory of Nyssa). Let them take as their pattern Christ's obedience to His Heavenly Father (says St. Ignatius). The Bishop has the right to make use of the Clergy, as of his own members, and of Priests as of his sons (says St. Ambrose). Let us remember our solemn promise, made to the Bishop when we were promoted to the Priesthood; and, if we have sometimes violated it, let us lament bitterly. Let us reflect on the duties which it imposes, and let us endeavour for the future to perform them faithfully.

"All His judgments are in my sight."—*Ps.* xvii. 23.

"Grant, O Lord, that the Priests may stand in their office."—From 2 *Paralip.* xxxv. 10.

FRIDAY.

THE ATTACHMENT OF THE CLERGY TO THE ROMAN PONTIFF.

I. MOTIVES OF THIS ATTACHMENT.
II. OBSTACLES WHICH HINDER IT.
III. FATAL RESULTS OF ITS LOSS.

"And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."—*St. John* x. 17.

1. *One Shepherd.* It is clearly written in Ezechiel (xxxvii. 24) that Christ is the sole invisible Shepherd of the whole flock: "They shall have one Shepherd." For the salvation of His sheep three things are required on their part (says St. Thomas), viz., obedience to His commands, unity of Charity, unity of Faith. But it is also clear that in this passage our Lord promises the unity of the Catholic Church under one visible Head, viz., the Roman Pontiff; to whom, in the person of St. Peter, was given the charge to "feed the lambs"—that is, the Laity—and to "feed the sheep"—that is, the mothers of the lambs, or the Prelates of the Church. Thus, to the Supreme Pontiff is assigned the whole fold, and not merely some portion of it, as to other Prelates; and hence St. Bernard wrote to Eugenius III.: "To you has been entrusted the whole flock throughout the world; you are the Shepherd, not only of the sheep, but of the shepherds." It is the duty of the *Clergy* to make their people understand this truth, which distinguishes the true Church from all false sects, and they must do so

by showing an example of submission, respect, and unity: "In all things shew thyself an example of good works" (Titus ii. 7). The Supreme Pontiff feeds the flock by his teaching, protection, and authority. "We define," says the Council of Florence, "that to him (*i.e.*, the Roman Pontiff), in the person of Blessed Peter, was entrusted by our Lord Jesus Christ the full power of feeding, ruling, and governing the Universal Church." Therefore it is the duty of Priests, as the foremost of the flock, to hang upon the lips of this universal Shepherd; it is for them to take care that he is honoured with fitting reverence and exact obedience. Let us consider, that, whoever has been distinguished in the Church for holiness has, at the same time, been distinguished for devotion to the Holy See; that being the centre of unity, the fountain of jurisdiction, the pillar and support of the truth. Saints there have been who, by their example, their words, and their writings, have zealously defended this "foundation stone,"—who were filled with horror at hearing contempt cast upon it by jests, tales, and cavils,—who gave to the flames all such books as tended to the dishonour of the Holy See. Shall we imitate their example? Shall we be of those "valiant men who defend the bed of Solomon"? or shall we be of "the sons of Ephraim, who turned their back upon the enemy in the day of battle"?

2. *One fold.* All Heresiarchs have begun by acknowledging, revering, and even invoking, the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, but afterwards have despised and impugned it, solely because it opposed their unbridled passions. In this way both they and their followers have ended in leaving the happy communion of the "one fold." Now it often happens that Catholic Priests, after having supported this authority in the course of their ecclesiastical studies, assume unconsciously the warlike attitude and rebellious language of heretics; and from no other motive than from the passions which wage war in them: "From whence are wars and contentions among you? are they not hence, from your concupiscences, which war in your members?" (St. James iv. 1). Some Bishops and Priests have been led on by pride to complain of the restrictions which the Chair of St. Peter assigns to their authority. In imitation of the Hebrew Priests,

they have refused the sweet yoke of Christ, and endeavoured to burst asunder its holy bonds: "Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yoke from us" (Ps. ii. 3; Acts iv. 26). In some cases avarice, which is the root of so many evils, has contributed to this result. For some ecclesiastics, despising venerable antiquity, and having no regard for the dignity of the Pontifical Throne, are unwilling to contribute the sums prescribed in the Papal Bulls, and therefore, both in public and private, are men's ears deafened with their complaints and lamentations. Others complain at having to pay for Dispensations. They do not consider that such a tax is most necessary in order to check the practice of obtaining dispensations; and, moreover, as contributing to the support of that Temple which is the glory of Christendom—as well as to the maintenance of those who labour for the service of the whole Church. The avarice of such ecclesiastics offends against the fidelity due to the Supreme Pastor (as St. Peter Chrysologus says); it impairs attachment to him, wounds charity, and disturbs peace. And yet these are the very Priests who, when promoted to some dignity in the Church, are usually the most rigid in exacting their rights, fleecing and draining their sheep to the very utmost. Meanwhile, by the just judgment of God, the threat pronounced by Holy Church (as expressed in the *Pontificale*) is often in such cases fulfilled: "Thou shalt give to the soldier that which thou hast refused to the Priest; and the State shall exact of thee that which thou hast withheld from Christ." What awful examples have we not witnessed of the fulfilment of this threat! What a disgrace for a Priest to see it verified in himself! What a subject for grave reflection for one who has made himself a slave to pride or avarice!

3. *They shall hear My voice.* Jesus speaks by the mouth of Peter and of his successors; and accordingly, the Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon, after having heard the letter of St. Leo to Flavian read in the Council, exclaimed: "We all believe it; . . . Peter has spoken by the mouth of Leo." Therefore to contradict, deride, or censure, the oracles of the Head of the Church, is an insult offered to St. Peter, and hence to Christ Himself. How

great is his guilt, whether he be Bishop, Priest, or Cleric, who dares thus to act? What scandal does he not give to the Laity? From the Clergy (be it said with shame) have originated all the insults which the Holy See has received. A sneer, a criticism, a jest, on the part of a Priest, affords an occasion to evil-minded persons of offering contempt to the Supreme Authority, and from thence they proceed to the contempt of the Priesthood generally, and so are led on to innumerable disorders. And will not Almighty God severely punish an ecclesiastic who has caused these evils? The Satrap Mamuchan was wise in counselling Assuerus not to leave the Queen unpunished for having despised the Sovereign, lest her example should produce serious disorders: "Queen Vashti hath not only injured the king, but also all the people and princes" (Esther i. 16). Therefore let us resolve to profess with heart and mouth the most sincere and filial attachment to the Vicar of Christ,—to pray for him, to respect his ordinances, to make them respected by others, and to promote veneration for him. Let us guard against every word which may offend him or give scandal to our hearers, and let us repent if we have ever transgressed that rule of action which the Saints have observed with so much exactness.

"The Lord preserve him and give him life, and make him blessed upon the earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies."—*Ps.* xl. 3.

"Honour thy father, in work, and word, and all patience."—*Eccles.* iii. 9.

SATURDAY.

THE MOTHER OF THE DIVINE SHEPHERD SHARES IN HIS PASTORAL TITLE.

I. THIS TITLE IS GIVEN TO MARY BY THEOLOGIANS.
II. IT PROMOTES ZEAL IN PASTORS.
III. IT IS A SOURCE OF CONSOLATION TO THE FAITHFUL.

"As the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father, and I lay down My life for My sheep."—*St. John* x. 15.

1. *My life for My sheep.* Jesus is the "Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world." He was "led as a sheep to the slaughter," and offered Himself for us on the Altar of the Cross. And who was it (according to the expression of St. Augustine) that "fed in her flesh this Lamb, this divine Sheep"—nay, who gave Him His flesh and His blood? Was it not Mary? If He is the "Good Shepherd," has not She most intimate relations with this Shepherd? Is not She His true and most holy Mother, in all things co-operating with Her Son for our good? Does not this suffice to merit such a title for Her? And has not holy Church attributed many praises and many titles to Her, which are written of and for our Lord Jesus Christ? (Prov. viii.; Eccl. xxiv.) If He has bestowed the title of Shepherds on Priests, and on the Apostles especially, shall we not please Him in honouring with this title Her also who is called the great Priestess and Queen of the Apostles? Our Saviour "gave His life for His sheep," and by His act of Redemption He formed for Himself *His flock*, and received it for His inheritance (Ps. ii. 8; Isa. liii.)

Now St. Ambrose speaks of Mary as the Co-redemptress and restorer of a lost world; and therefore She is justly called "Mother of the Divine Shepherd," who also Herself feeds His flock; and in this is the Son glorified, Who has so highly exalted His Mother. In holy Scripture, the Angels are also called "Shepherds;" for (says St. Ambrose) not only to Bishops, who are ordained to rule the Lord's flock, but to Angels also, this office is assigned. Now there is no one among Angels or men who guards, defends, and feeds the flock of Jesus as does the Queen of Angels and men; for all the benefits which Almighty God bestows on His fold pass through the hands of Mary. God wills that we have nothing but what passes through Mary's hands (says St. Bernard). Hence Rupertus rightly explains those words of the Canticles (i. 7) of Mary: "Go forth and follow after the steps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the tents of the shepherds;" and by St. Antoninus She is called the good Shepherd, daily feeding the Church with the blessed fruit of Her womb, the Bread of Angels, which was formed in Her, and which is ministered to us in the Sacrament of the Altar.

2. *My life for My sheep.* It is a great consolation to a Pastor, in the midst of his anxieties, fears, and contradictions, to reflect that he has a Pastor in heaven who protects all who second Her loving intentions. He may say to Her, as Barac said to Debbora: "If thou wilt come with me, I will go; if thou wilt not come with me, I will not go" (Judges iv. 8). I will go to feed the flock, to seek the lost sheep; but do thou assist me with thy protection, enlighten me in doubt, succour me in peril; and obtain courage for me. Like Debbora, Mary will answer: "I will go indeed with thee" (*ibid.* 9); and how, indeed, could She refuse Her assistance to those who labour for the salvation of souls, when for those "sheep" She gave "Her Son's life," which was far dearer to Her than Her own? Mary offered the life of Jesus upon Calvary, and She was ready to sacrifice Him with Her own hands, had He so willed. Hence the sheep are, as it were, Her children, whom She brought forth at the foot of the Cross: and hence does St. Bonaventure address Her: "We therefore pray Thee, O blessed Mother, help Thy servants, whom Thou didst

bring forth beneath the Cross of Thy Son." Therefore, even though they are not aware of it, the care of this great Shepherdess goes before the steps of all holy Pastors who guide the flock; and in the day of eternity they will say: "This Wisdom went before me, and I knew not that she was the mother of them all" (Wisdom vii. 12). With good reason then did the Capuchins choose Her for the Protectress of their Indian Missions under this title, and obtained from Clement XIII. many plenary Indulgences. The Redemptorist Fathers also obtained the favour of a Mass and proper Office on the 3rd of September in honour of Mary, under the title of "Mother of the Divine Shepherd." Therefore let us invoke Her in the performance of our pastoral duties, certain that no creature can be more ready to hear us, more powerful to aid us, or more desirous for the right conduct of this most important work.

3. *I lay down My life for My sheep.* It is a great consolation for sinners to remember that among all creatures there is no more lively image of Jesus, none so full of the Spirit of Jesus, as Mary. Let them remember that Her Son is the Shepherd Who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the desert, to go after that which is lost, —that He lays it on His shoulders, and carries it back to the fold rejoicing (St. Luke xv. 4);—and then let them be convinced that He has committed to His Blessed Mother all the tenderness and indulgence which can most readily move the sheep to return; let them be persuaded that She is the Reconciler of wandering sheep, and, as She is called by Albertus Magnus, "the Reconciler of sinners." On the other hand, the just, regarding Mary in this capacity, will experience the consolation and confidence which correspond to so tender a likeness, and will rejoice in hearing these words, uttered as it were by Her lips: "I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel" (Jer. l. 19). It was therefore under the figure of a Shepherdess that the great Mother of God vouchsafed to appear to several of the most illustrious Saints and servants of God, as may be read in their lives. On this account, too, the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XIV., at the request of Cardinal Molina, granted one hundred days' Indulgence to all who should recite a "Hail

Mary" before some image representing Mary as a Shepherdess. Let us then honour Her under this title, let us endeavour to be docile sheep, let us trust in Her goodness, and let us imitate Her as best we can, in feeding the portion of the flock committed to our charge.

"We Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture."—*Ps.* lxxviii. 13.
"Feed Thy kids beside the tents of the shepherds."—*Cant.* i. 7.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE NEAR APPROACH OF DEATH.

I. IT IS A SELF-EVIDENT TRUTH.
II. IT IS A TRUTH WHICH GOD REPEATS TO ALL.
III. IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPRESSED UPON PRIESTS.

"Jesus said to His disciples: a little while, and now you shall not see Me, and again a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father."—*St. John* xvi. 16.

1. *A little while, and now you shall not see Me.* If we look beyond the sense in which our Lord spoke these words in the first instance to His Apostles, we may (with St. Augustine) consider the "little while" to signify the duration of the world. St. Bonaventure reflects that it may be called "a little while" in regard to its duration, its excessive brevity, and its swift flight: for it lasts but a moment in comparison of eternity, and will soon have its end; moreover, the point which we call the present, and of which alone we are masters, is exceedingly

brief; lastly, the hours fly with so great swiftness, that they consume and vanish away without hope of return. Now if such is the duration of the World, how is it in regard to man's life? As holy Job says: "My days have passed more swiftly than the web is cut by the weaver, and are consumed without any hope" (Job vii. 6). Philosophers have written much on this most evident truth; but holy Scripture, joining together the shortness of life and the uncertainty of death, speaks thus of man: "To-day he is lifted up, and to-morrow he shall not be found, because he is returned into his earth, and his thought is come to nothing" (1 Mach. ii. 63). On this ground we are urged to remember our death: "remember that death is not slow" (Eccl. xiv. 12). Are we thinking of our last end? or do we forget it like the worldling, who, precisely on this account, is unstable in his good resolutions: "She hath not remembered her end, therefore is she become unstable"? (Lam. i. 8). If only, in all our actions, we remembered the end, we should not sin for ever.

2. *A little while, and you shall see Me.* The "little while" may be understood (according to St. Bonaventure) of the short time which will elapse before we arrive at the beatific vision of God, to which we are called. Jesus repeats the words, "a little while," and repeats them after the manner of an enigma (as St. Chrysostom remarks), in order that all His disciples may fix their attention on them more closely. How often has our most loving God impressed this great truth upon us, in order to keep us continually intent on death! He says to us: "For a little time" (Apoc. vi. 11)—"For yet a little, and a very little while, and He that is to come, will come, and will not delay" (Heb. x. 37)—"A little time of a corruptible life" (2 Mach. vi. 25). To render us still more sensible of these truths, the Holy Spirit puts them before us under various similitudes. Our life is compared to "waters that return no more" (2 Kings xiv. 14)—to the "torrent that passeth swiftly in the valleys" (Job vi. 15)—to a "vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away" (Jas. iv. 15)—to a "smoke which is scattered abroad by the wind" (Wis. v. 15)—to "an arrow shot at a mark"

(*ibid.* 12)—to "a shadow" (*ibid.* 9). Nay, man himself is said to "pass as an image," or, as the Hebrew text has it, "as a vain show" (Ps. xxxviii. 7). And will not all this suffice to undeceive us? Shall we ever delude ourselves with chimerical projects of long happiness upon earth? Shall we be dull of heart, loving vanity and seeking lies?

3. *Because I go to the Father.* Jesus Christ went to His Father before us, in order to "shew us the way to a new life," and that He might shortly receive His ministers in their Paternal inheritance: "I will take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be" (St. John xiv. 3). He impressed these truths upon them in a special manner, in order that they might continually remind the Faithful of the shortness of life. And indeed, when our Divine Lord conferred on St. Peter the charge of feeding the flock, He spoke to him at the same time of his death: "signifying by what death he should glorify God" (St. John xxi. 19). When God declared the divine dignity of the Priesthood: "I have said, you are Gods,"—He added, "but you like men shall die" (Ps. lxxxi. 6, 7). He has taught His Priests that they must follow one another in constant succession, since death must hinder them from remaining at their post: "The others were made many priests, because by reason of death they were not suffered to continue" (Heb. vii. 23). He reminds us indeed that the Priest falls in death, like the king on the battle-field, "as though he had not been anointed with oil" (2 Kings i. 21); and therefore He impresses upon Priests, more than upon others (as St. Hilary points out), the necessity of watchfulness in the expectation of death: "Watch ye therefore, because ye know not what hour your Lord will come" (St. Matt. xxiv. 42). Thus, also, He warned those seven Bishops, to whom He sent His admonitions by St. John, that death was near, and urged them to repentance (Apoc. ii.) Let us profit by this salutary advice; let us not render the loving words of our great High Priest of no avail.

"O Lord, make me know my end, . . . that I may know what is wanting to me."—*Ps.* xxxviii. 5.

"The time of my departure is at hand."—*2 Tim.* iv. 6.

MONDAY.

THE DIFFICULTY OF UNDERSTANDING THE NEAR APPROACH OF DEATH, EVEN IN THE CASE OF PRIESTS.

I. THE CAUSE OF THIS DIFFICULTY.
II. IT IS SHEWN BY EXPERIENCE.
III. MEANS OF OVERCOMING IT.

"Then some of His disciples said one to another: What is this that He saith to us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, A little while, and you shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore: What is this that He saith, A little while? we know not what He speaketh. And Jesus knew that they had a mind to ask Him."—*St. John* xvi. 17—19.

1. *What is this that He saith, A little while?* The disciples understood not the words "a little while," because they had not yet experienced their significance (says St. Augustine); but when those words were fulfilled, then did they understand them fully. We likewise have difficulty in understanding the shortness of life, and the near approach of death; but when our end shall come, all illusions will be dispelled, and then shall we perceive clearly that which we ought to have seen from the beginning. The affection we have for this present life, the distractions which it prepares for us,—its pleasures, riches, honours,—are so many trifles drawing us away from the thought of our end: "The bewitching of vanity obscureth good things" (Wisd. iv. 12). The very occupations which we repeat day after day keep us ever turning like a wheel, and suffer us not to reflect that before long our movements will be arrested: "O my God, make them like a wheel"

(Ps. lxxxii. 14). The natural horror which we have of death prevents us from looking at it as near, more especially if we are resting in the good things of this present life: "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions" (Eccl. xli. 1)! The devil cannot say to us, as he said to Eve: "No, you shall not die the death" (Gen. iii. 4); but he persuades us that we shall not die this day, this month, this year. He persuades us (says St. Chrysostom); and we readily listen to him. On this account few understand the "little while;" few keep before them the warning of Almighty God: "Yet a little and a very little while, and My indignation shall cease" (Isa. x. 25). But, for our part, let us endeavour to overcome the difficulty. Almighty God warns us that He will not delay to judge us; let these words be the sword with which to slay our treacherous Enemy, detaching us from the world and from ourselves, so that we may ever look upon death as near at hand.

2. *We know not what He speaketh.* St. Thomas says that the disciples ascribed it to their ignorance that they understood not that mysterious "little while." Daily experience shows us that few, even among Priests, understand practically how life is but as a moment in comparison of eternity, and how God leaves us upon earth for a little time in order that we may lay up merits for eternity: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee" (Isa. liv. 7). Some preachers, who treat often of this subject from the pulpit, and make their hearers tremble at the thought of death, resemble those Pagan philosophers who wrote copiously "on the shortness of life," whilst at the same time they amassed riches and sought all the comforts of this world, as though they should never die. Of these it may be said: "They say, and do not" (St. Matt. xxiii. 3). They exhort the Faithful to "watch, expecting their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding," whilst they themselves give way to sleep, as if they were not in the same danger. Other Priests assist the dying, dispose them for that tremendous passage, receive their last sigh, pray for their soul, accompany them to the tomb;—and yet, as regards themselves, they are altogether unmindful of death. They hear not that silent

voice of the dead, which the Holy Spirit repeats to them: "Remember my judgment, for thine also shall be so: yesterday for me, and to-day for thee" (Eccl. xxxviii. 23). Great indeed is our difficulty in realising the fact that "we die daily," and that life itself is (as St. Gregory calls it) a "prolonged death." If it were not so, should we be so impatient in tribulations? Should we be so desirous of temporal goods? Should we do so much to obtain this benefice, that honour? Should we be so disturbed at any failure in our expectations? The Psalmist, after saying "man passeth as an image," adds, as if it were a necessary inference, "yea, he is disquieted in vain" (Ps. xxxviii. 7). Let us examine carefully whether we indeed look upon our death as if it were far off, and like a dream.

3. *And Jesus knew.* Jesus alone knows the dispositions of our heart, for "all is naked and open to His eyes." As God (says St. Bonaventure), He knew His disciples' doubt, though it was not expressed; whilst, as a compassionate Master, He instructed them. He, in like manner, will communicate His light to us, in order that we may understand so important a truth; these words will come to us from Him, by the mouth of the Prophet: "Expect, expect again, a little there, a little there" (Isa. xxviii. 13). He alone, Who has fixed the term of our life, can by His grace enable us to look upon our death as near and to live as those who realise this truth. Let us, therefore, never be remiss in meditation on this momentous subject. Let us constantly bear in mind how many Priests—our masters, our friends, our equals in age—have already passed away. We are not better than they; nor will death spare us: "I am not better than my brethren" (1 Mach. xiii. 5). Let us prepare for death, for our years will pass rapidly away: "Their days were consumed in vanity, and their years in haste" (Ps. lxxvii. 33).

"I had in my mind the eternal years."—*Ps.* lxxvi. 6.

"I expect until my change come."—*Job* xiv. 14.

TUESDAY.

THE NEAR APPROACH OF DEATH A MOTIVE FOR USING DILIGENTLY THE GRACE RECEIVED AT ORDINATION.

I. IN RESPECT OF OUR OFFICE AS MINISTERS.
II. IN RESPECT OF OUR TEACHING.
III. IN RESPECT OF OUR PASTORAL SOLICITUDE.

"And He said to them: Of this do you enquire among yourselves, because I said: A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, A little while, and you shall see Me?"—*St. John* xvi. 19.

1. *Of this do you enquire among yourselves?* Not without grave reason did Jesus four times repeat these words: "A little while;" and, were it not that they form a most important subject of meditation, the Holy Spirit would not have reiterated them (as He has done) thrice, so that they are repeated altogether seven times. They represent, as it were, the alphabet of the Christian life; they are the most powerful curb of passion, the readiest means to acquire patience. Nay, more: it is only by continual meditation on the truth contained in them that we can expect to make a profitable use of the grace of Order, according to the different grades to which we have been admitted in the Church, as signified by the Apostle in the following words: "Whether ministry, in ministering, or he that teacheth, in doctrine . . . . he that ruleth with carefulness" (Rom. xii. 7). For, first, the thought of death will be of much service to the Cleric in his ministry (as St. Thomas explains). If he have occasion to suffer anything, he will re-

member the words: "Behold how I have laboured a little, and have found much rest to myself" (Eccl. li. 35); if he have to attend to study, he will remember those other words: "I bowed down my ear a little, and received her" [viz. Wisdom] (Eccl. li. 21). Temptations, which have to be overcome in youth, and which trouble him, will be rendered tolerable by the thought of their brevity and of the uncertainty of death: "You must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations" (1 Pet. i. 6). This thought made Stephen and Lawrence angels rather than men in their Diaconate; and merited for Nepozianus the high commendation with which St. Jerome honoured him. If we had sanctified the early days of our Diaconate with this thought, we should have been better prepared for the Priesthood. Let us repair now, as best we can, the neglect of so great good.

2. *A little while, and you shall not see Me.—Or he that teacheth, in doctrine.* He who preaches—whether he instruct, admonish, or rebuke his hearers—must make the thought of death the soul, as it were, of his discourse. He must imitate our Saviour, Who began His Sermon on the Mount by the Beatitudes, all of which have reference to death and to the reward which follows it. In the course of His preaching He constantly inculcated watchfulness, in expectation of His coming (St. Matt. xxiv. 42); and, finally, in the Garden of Gethsemane, His last warning to His disciples was—"Watch ye" (St. Matt. xxvi. 41). And, lest we should think that He enjoined watchfulness only on the Apostles, He added, elsewhere, those momentous words: "What I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (St. Mark xiii. 37). Moreover, this thought will encourage Preachers not to neglect the ministry of the Word, as it encouraged St. Paul, when he looked on his sacrifice as near at hand, and declared: "I am even now ready to be sacrificed" (2 Tim. iv. 6). So also the certainty of imminent death moved St. Peter to admonish the Faithful, so that he wrote to them: "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance, being assured that the laying away of this my tabernacle is at hand" (2 Pet. i. 13, 14). In these words (says St. Peter Damian) he shewed himself the good Shepherd, who would live and die, not

for himself, but for his disciples. Is this our motive in preaching to the exclusion of all vainglory or self-interest? Do we continually excite in ourselves and in our hearers the thought of the near approach of death, and of the tremendous judgment of God?

3. *A little while, and you shall see Me.* In saying, "He that ruleth with carefulness," the Apostle indicates Parish Priests and all who have the charge of souls. Christ repeats this "little while" to console them (says St. Chrysostom), assuring them that His absence will be very short. And, indeed, if we would bear with resignation the troubles of pastoral solicitude, it is necessary to keep ever before our eyes these words: "After you have suffered a little, He will Himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you" (1 Pet. v. 10). When Christ would console the good Pastor of the Church of Philadelphia, He promised that He would not delay His coming,—thus signifying that death was nigh: "Behold, I come quickly" (Apoc. iii. 11). On the other hand, to the Bishop of the Church of Sardis, whose works were not complete in His sight, He held out this threat: "If thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee" (Apoc. iii. 3). If, whenever we celebrated Holy Mass, we thought that we were doing so for the last time, how great would be our fervour! how devoutly also should we recite our Office, and perform our other duties, if we kept this thought before our mind! Each day does the Church put into our mouth the Canticle of holy Simeon, so that we may constantly be reminded of our death, and look upon each day as the last of our life. She would have her ministers think daily of death (says Cornelius à Lapide), in order that they may so live as if at eventide they were to die. Nor let us flatter ourselves that we shall live long because we are useful to the Church, as though God had need of us. How much good might not Jonathan have done for God's people!—how much good was King Josias doing! And yet death spared them not in their fresh youth. The Baptist—the Proto-Martyr—St. Ludovic, Archbishop of Toulouse—St. Charles, Archbishop of Milan—were all most useful to the Church; yet they died early. How many more souls might not

St. Francis Xavier have saved, had his Apostleship been prolonged! How many youthful Priests among our own friends, who gave promise of great fruit, have been cut off prematurely! Let us consider that our Lord has hitherto deferred His coming to judgment in order to give us time to expiate our faults, and (as St. Gregory says) that He may find less in us to condemn. Let us profit by His goodness, let us not frustrate His loving designs, and let us not forget that "yet a little, and a very little while, and He that is to come will come, and will not delay" (Heb. x. 37).

"All our days are spent, . . . our years shall be considered as a spider."—*Ps.* lxxxix. 9.

"Let us hasten therefore to enter into that rest."—*Heb.* iv. 11.

WEDNESDAY.

THREE PROPHECIES ADDRESSED TO THE CLERGY BY OUR LORD.

I. THAT THE WORLD SHOULD REJOICE.
II. THAT HIS PRIESTS SHOULD HAVE SORROW.
III. THAT THE JOY SHOULD BE TURNED INTO SORROW, AND THE SORROW INTO JOY.

"Amen, amen, I say to you: that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice, and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."—*St. John* xvi. 20.

1. *The world shall rejoice.* Jesus Christ was the Prophet foretold by Moses, and by all the other prophets (Deut. xviii. 15). Here He speaks as a Prophet, and we can say, that we have *truly* "found in Him our Prophet" (St. John i. 45). He foretells

the exultation of the Jews, in their oppression of the Just One, "cutting Him off from the land of the living;" as also the joy which they would feel in having driven away the Apostles, while they themselves would be abandoned to their own blindness, obstinacy, and perfidy. These Jews are thus an emblem of all those "who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things" (Prov. ii. 14)—who rejoice in those things which should cause them infinite sorrow—because they are blind, because they are infatuated, because they have never experienced the true joy, which is spiritual joy, because they still give vent with impunity to their unbridled lust. Such a subject is worthy of grave consideration; for we often find men exulting, like the Jews, at the oppression of the Priesthood, at the despoiling of the Church, at outrages cast upon the dignity of religion, at contempt thrown upon the law of God, or at the fall of a Priest into some abyss of iniquity, which they themselves had opened under his feet. To them it may be said: "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (St. Luke xxii. 53), and we may also add: "Wo to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep" (St. Luke vi. 25).

2. *You shall be made sorrowful.* Priests are not of this world: "You are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world" (St. John xv. 19). Hence their heart, being the heart of the wise, ought to have no part in worldly joy, which is the joy of fools: "the heart of the wise is where there is mourning, and the heart of fools where there is mirth" (Eccle. vii. 5). They wear the garments of mourning, in order to shew themselves heirs of the Apostles, representing thereby the fulfilment of our Lord's prophecy when "He found them sleeping for sorrow" (St. Luke xxii. 45). The motives for this sorrow in exemplary Priests are enumerated by St. Gregory. In the first place (he says) it springs from the consideration of past sins—from the fear of not having received pardon for them, and the need of doing penance for them: "for the sorrow that is according to God worketh penance" (2 Cor. vii. 10). Secondly, it is produced by the thought of God's judgments, which have made even the Saints tremble, so that man knows not what shall be his end: "man knoweth not

his own end" (Eccle. ix. 12). Thirdly, it arises from compassion for the misery of sinners, who "have fallen into the pit" and care not, who live in continual uneasiness "like the troubled sea," who are either punished by Almighty God "with many stripes," or abandoned to a fatal impunity, till they end with a most wicked death. Of such sorrow, characteristic of a zealous heart, it may be said (in the words of St. Augustine): Pious is the sadness, and blessed is the misery, of such as afflict themselves for the sins of others. Lastly, the delay of eternal glory causes souls who are enamoured of God to groan and lament, and is as a wound in the depth of their heart. In all these respects the Priest may exhibit a sadness which often serves to correct and restrain scandals; for it is written: "By the sadness of the countenance the mind of the offender is corrected" (Eccle. vii. 4); and: "The north wind driveth away rain, so doth a sad countenance a backbiting tongue" (Prov. xxv. 23). Have we this holy sadness, or do we seek the joy of the world?

3. *Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.* This prophecy was fulfilled in the Apostles, who "were glad when they saw the Lord" (St. John xx. 20), and who, after the Ascension, "went back into Jerusalem with great joy" (St. Luke xxiv. 52). But it is verified generally in the elect, who in their sadness are visited by God with abundant consolations, and who are "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. vi. 10). It is verified in Priests, who are often gladdened by the sight which God affords them of the fruit of their labours, and therefore do they say: "I rejoice and congratulate with you all" (Phil. ii. 17) . . . "I was exceeding glad" (ii. John 4). This joy will be perfected and consummated in eternity: "that when His glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. iv. 13). The joy of sinners, on the contrary, lasts but a moment: "the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment" (Job xx. 5); and afterwards they fall into an eternal sadness, when they are filled "with the cup of grief and sadness" (Ezech. xxiii. 33). In a word, all will be reversed: *now* the wicked rejoice and the good mourn; but in a short time it will be otherwise, for *then* the latter shall rejoice, and the former shall mourn. O my God,

impress these truths on my mind and on my heart, so that I may never, for the sake of any temporal joy, forfeit that which is eternal.

"Thou shalt make him joyful in gladness with Thy countenance."—*Ps.* xx. 7.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God."—*Isaias* lxi. 10.

THURSDAY.

THE ZEALOUS LABOURER COMPARED TO A WOMAN IN LABOUR.

I. How he resembles a woman in labour.
II. The throes which he suffers.
III. The man-child to which he gives birth.

"A woman, when she is in labour, hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."—*St. John* xvi. 21.

1. *A woman, when she is in labour.* Our Saviour compares Himself, in this passage, to a woman in labour; for (says St. Chrysostom) on the Cross He brought us forth, with most bitter pains, to true life. In holy Scripture the Church shews Herself under the same similitude; being represented as the tender mother of innumerable children. We need not wonder, then, if the Ministers of Christ and of the Church are likewise spoken of under the same figure. The Apostles were the first to become mothers of the people, bringing them forth to the life of grace, and thus giving example to all evangelical labourers throughout all ages. Each one of the Apostles could say to

those whom he had converted and sanctified: "My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. iv. 19). See by this how the paternal—nay, the maternal—bowels of a zealous Priest are torn (says St. Chrysostom): and do you, who have care of souls, learn from this to be mothers of your subjects, and to make yourselves loved rather than feared, as St. Bernard enjoins. You will bring forth children with maternal affection (says St. Ambrose), when the image of Christ shall be formed in them; and you must bring them forth (according to St. Augustine's words) as often as they stray away from God. You must bring them forth "in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4), "in newness of spirit" (vii. 6), "in newness of mind" (xii. 2). Woe to the Priest, who, in place of so doing, fulfils to his disgrace the words of the Royal Prophet: "He hath been in labour with injustice, he hath conceived sorrow, and brought forth iniquity" (Ps. vii. 15).

2. *Hath sorrow.* If Almighty God said to Eve that she should bring forth children with sorrow, to us also does He say: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children" (Gen. iii. 16). Nay, the pains of Apostolical labourers are compared to those of the hind, which, as naturalists tell us, are peculiarly acute: "Hast thou observed the hinds when they fawn? . . . they bow themselves to bring forth young, and they cast them, and send forth roarings" (Job xxxix. 1—3. St. Gregory, in explaining this passage, enumerates the various pains which zealous spiritual Fathers have suffered for the conversion of souls. What circumspection (he says), what sweetness, what humility, what contempt of temporal goods, what patience in adversity, what fear of ill success, what danger to their own person, have they not endured! Few consider this (continues St. Gregory), because few have experienced the pain and sorrow of bringing forth souls to faith and penance. To these sorrows must be added the assaults and temptations of the devil, who rages terribly against them, and will not relinquish the prey he has usurped. Let us remember what St. Paul tells us of his Apostleship (2 Cor. xi.)—let us remember that he wrote: "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. ii. 3). Rarely

does it happen that a sinner is brought forth to eternal life without great pain: "Before she was in labour she brought forth" (Isa. lxvi. 7). St. Teresa discovered that the pain, the grief, the persecution, experienced by one who strove to convert a soul, was a sign of the conversion being really effected. Shall we then be discouraged,—shall we be unwilling to suffer something for the love of Jesus, Who has suffered so much to give us life?

3. *But when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish.* Women foresee the pains of childbirth, they know them to be most bitter, yet they meet them courageously, and would rather suffer them than remain barren. They may cry and afflict themselves, but they hope for a joyful delivery: "As a woman with child, when she draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs" (Isa. xxvi. 17). Yet they know not if the child will be male or female, strong or weak, good or bad: "I know not whether he will be a wise man or a fool" (Eccle. ii. 19). And shall the idea of pain discourage us when we are about to bring forth a man-child? Our Saviour chose to name a male rather than a female child, as indicating (says St. Bonaventure) strength and perfection. Accordingly, we are bound to render our spiritual children perfect and strong champions of Christ, and to secure, both for ourselves and for them, so far as in us lies, the inheritance of an eternal kingdom. What a disgrace for us to be wanting in the firmness, patience, strength, which women display! What a disgrace if, on account of such cowardice, we hang back from bringing forth children to the light of grace! "The children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth" (Isa. xxxvii. 3). Let us beg strength of Almighty God; let us beg of Him the happiness of this spiritual birth; let us beg of Him a firm hope of eternal joy.

"My God is my helper, and in Him will I put my trust."—*Ps.* xvii. 3.

"I have kept silence, I have been patient, I will speak now as a woman in labour."—*Isa.* xlii. 14.

FRIDAY.

THREE THINGS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE DEATH OF A GOOD PRIEST.

I. THE VISITATION OF CHRIST.
II. THE PRIEST, TO WHOM HE COMES.
III. THE CONSOLATIONS WHICH HE BRINGS.

"So also you now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."—*St. John* xvi. 22.

1. *But I will see you again.* This is the fruit of all Apostolical labours (says St. Augustine); this is the end, to attain which the good Priest has led so laborious a life,—namely, at his death to see Christ. Our Saviour Himself has expressed the same in these words: "I will come again, and will take you to Myself" (St. John xiv. 3). Sometimes Jesus comes to take His Priests in a way which to the world seems evil, and which is "taken for misery and for utter destruction" (Wisd. iii. 2, 3). But this only serves to increase their merit, for by a contemptible mode of death they fly freely to heaven. Usually, however, Jesus shews how dear to Him is that minister who has rightly understood his Lord's will, and has carefully executed it: "A wise servant is acceptable to the king" (Prov. xiv. 35). He has declared that servant blessed, who at his death shall be found occupied in providing for His mystical family: "Blessed is that servant whom, when his Lord shall come, He shall find so doing" (St. Luke xii. 43). Long since did Jesus begin the work of the

sanctification of that servant, giving him the pledge of eternal life, and enriching him with His grace, so often as He visited him in Holy Communion; thus affording him sufficient strength for the work of the ministry, and enabling him to merit for himself a crown of justice. Hence He Himself will bring to perfection the work which He had begun, and continued for so long: "The works of God are perfect" (Deut. xxxii. 4). He will pardon his sins, cancelling the relics of sin by means of the holy Sacraments; for He has promised this favour to him who should have converted only one sinner, and such a Priest has converted many: "He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his ways, shall save his soul" [or, as many read it, "*his own* soul"] "and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James v. 20). He will shew mercy to a Priest who has spent his life in works of mercy; for He has said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (St. Matt. v. 7). He will excite in him that confidence in the divine goodness which he had himself excited in the dying. He will make him participate in those holy Indulgences which he had procured for others: "for what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap" (Gal. vi. 8). He will deliver him from violent temptations; He will not suffer him to fall into the hands of the Enemy; and, on his bed of pain, He will pour upon him His sweetest consolations; as He has promised in that psalm: "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor" (Ps. xl. 2).

2. *Your heart shall rejoice.* The good Priest is neither confounded, nor struck as with a thunderbolt, when he hears "the answer of death" (2 Cor. i. 9). He is accustomed to think of it, to make it the subject of his meditations, to propose the consideration of it to others. He has watched, and has made others watch; he has expected the coming of the Judge, and he has many spiritual children who "love His coming" (2 Tim. iv. 8). He is not attached to the things of earth, and has been ready to sacrifice all, that he might run his course well—that he might "consummate his course" (Acts xx. 24). Therefore he hears his Lord's call with joy, and says: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxxi. 1). He is accus-

tomed to resist the devil, and therefore, with the help of grace, he will easily repel his last assaults, after the example of him who, having slain the lion and the bear under the Divine protection, afterwards slew the giant (1 Kings xvii.) And, since the testimony of a good conscience is not alone sufficient for him, he invokes (as he has ever invoked) that God Who is merciful and "rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. x. 12). He has recourse to Jesus, Whose Person he has represented, Whose Name he has glorified, Whose Gospel he has preached, Whose Blood he has dispensed; and, hiding himself in His pierced side, he will remind Him of His great promise: "Him that cometh to Me I will not cast out" (St. John vi. 37). He beseeches God not to close a mouth, which had been consecrated to the Divine Mysteries, to the recital of the Holy Office, and to the preaching of His Word: "Shut not the mouths of them that sing to Thee" (Esther xiii. 17). With such thoughts does the good Priest (as St. Gregory says) joyfully expect the Judge, and when the time of his death shall draw near, he will rejoice in the reward of glory.

3. *Your joy no man shall take from you.* Our Lord Jesus Christ promises to His faithful Ministers, in these words, that joy without end, which is the true end of man (as St. Augustine declares). But, doubtless (as St. Gregory says), the beginning of this joy is tranquillity in death. What consolation will it not be to a Priest to have spent "days full" of good works, to have "traded with the talents" given him by his Lord, and to appear at His Tribunal neither void nor without fruit, but with abundance of merits, and accompanied by many souls whom he has sanctified: "They will make you to be neither empty nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. i. 8). Sweet is the sleep of the labourer: "sleep is sweet to a labouring man" (Eccl. v. 11)—that is to say (as an ancient commentator explains it), after he has served the Lord of all things in this present life, he shall inherit the reward of his labours in the life to come. Closing his eyes in this sweet sleep, strengthened with the holy Sacraments, he will say: "In peace, in the self-same I will sleep, and I will rest" (Ps. lv. 9). Joyfully will he take into his hands the image of Jesus crucified, Whom he has preached, and will hear His voice speaking to his heart: "Be of

son" (St. Matt. ix. 2). He will turn his eyes and his heart to his tender Mother, Whose worship he has promoted, Whose patronage he has invoked, Whose virtues he has imitated, Whose glories he has celebrated; and he will hear from Her lips the comforting words: "He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord" (Prov. viii. 35). O Mary, shall my death be like this? I hope for this blessing from God's mercy, through Thy intercession.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."—*Ps.* cxv. 15.

"Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them."—*Numbers* xxiii. 10.

SATURDAY.

THE PIOUS OBSERVANCE OF THE MONTH OF MARY TO BE PROMOTED BY PRIESTS.

I. To extend Her praises.
II. To set forth Her example.
III. To ensure Her protection.

"Behold from henceforth all generations shall call Me blessed."—*St. Luke* i. 48.

1. In predicting that *all generations should call Her blessed*, the Virgin alluded to the words of Lea: "This is for my happiness, for women will call me blessed" (Gen. xxx. 13). But there are many points of difference between the type and the anti-type: thus, Lea was called blessed only by women, whereas Mary was to be called blessed by men and by women—by Priests and by laity alike. Moreover, it is the duty of Priests to make known those prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin from which Her blessed-

ness springs,—to advance Her glory, to defend Her Virginity, Her sanctity, Her dignity. Thus will they "do the work of an evangelist, and fulfil their ministry" (2 Tim. iv. 5). So innumerable are the praises of our Blessed Lady, that a month is well set apart for the celebration of a small portion of them; for Her praises surpass the mind and tongue even of the Angels. Suarez considers that, after the knowledge of God and of Christ, which theology gives to the Faithful, there is none more useful or more worthy of a theologian than that of the Blessed Virgin. Unless we acquire such knowledge, our people will have but a rude devotion and will not offer to our Lady that which is called a "reasonable service:" for, if the mind be uninstructed, and the heart unmoved, they can honour Her with the lips only: "This people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify Me, but their heart is far from Me" (Isa. xxix. 13). Blessed is the Priest, who loves this most loving Mother, who places all his delight in celebrating Her glories, and who can repeat those words of St. Bernard: "Truly nothing delights me more, nothing overpowers me more, than to discourse on the glory of the Blessed Virgin."

2. If *all generations call Mary blessed*, they have thereby the strongest inducement to participate in Her blessedness,—that is, to imitate Her virtues; for (says St. Chrysostom) he who praises others renders himself worthy of praise; and St. Augustine calls it a kind of false adulation to praise any one without caring to imitate him. Therefore the Blessed Virgin invites us, not only to invoke Her help by watching at Her gates, but also to follow Her in Her ways: "Blessed are they that keep my ways . . . . blessed is the man that watcheth daily at my gates" (Prov. viii. 32, 34). During the month of Mary there is every opportunity of setting forth Her virtues, and, from them, taking occasion to speak of Christian duties, to meditate on eternal truths, and to break, in suitable manner, the bread of the Divine Word. Our hearers, in placing before their eyes Mary's virtues, will behold in Her the image of Christ, Whose disciples and followers they ought to be. Mary is, indeed, called by St. Thomas of Villanova "the expressed image of Her Son," and by St. Bernardin the chief imitator of Christ Her Son—not so much by following His

footsteps, as by reverence of pious affections, by faith, religion, and most ardent charity. The Faithful, being well disposed by such instructions, will gain the Indulgences granted to this pious practice by Pius VII. (21st March, 1815), viz., three hundred days for each day, and a Plenary Indulgence once during the month, on the usual conditions of Confession and Communion, and prayer to God for the necessities of the Church and the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff.

3. The Blessed Virgin, whilst She is said to be *blessed by all generations*, renders all the Saints blessed by Her intercession (says St. Anselm); She is the supreme, ever-new felicity of all men (says St. Germanus). She will surely, then, protect the Priest who has caused Her to be honoured for a whole month: "She will meet him as an honourable mother . . . and she shall hold him fast, and he shall not be confounded, and she shall exalt him among his neighbours" (Eccles. xv. 2—4); which words are referred to the Blessed Virgin by St. Ildephonsus and St. Bonaventure. St. Alphonsus enjoins every Parish Priest to make a solemn Novena once every year in honour of our Lady, adding that he will thus obtain a powerful advocate at the hour of death. Will not he, then, experience Her protection, who has honoured Her for a whole month, and caused the fulfilment of all the pious practices usual in this month? Will not our hearers, on their side, who have dedicated this most beautiful month to Her service, also enjoy Her patronage? Our Blessed Lady (says St. Andrew of Crete) is most munificent, and will requite the least service. Why, then, do not we profit, and make others profit, by so tender a devotion?

"I will glorify Thy name for ever."—*Ps.* lxxxv. 12.

"Because he hath so magnified Thy name, that Thy praise shall not depart out of the mouth of men, who shall be mindful of the power of the Lord."—*Judith* xiii. 25.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

RIGHT INTENTION.

I. NECESSITY OF A RIGHT INTENTION.
II. HOW TO PRESERVE IT.
III. FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF LOSING IT.

"I go to Him that sent Me, and none of you asketh Me: Whither goest Thou? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart."—*St. John* xvi. 5.

1. *I go to Him that sent Me.* A Priest, in the fulfilment of his Ministry, goes to that God Who sent him, when he acts with a right *intention*—such intention guiding the soul by love towards the desired object. Love may be regarded as the foot of the soul (says St. Augustine); for by love it is moved, as it were, to the place whither it tendeth. God has given us means and occasions for the exercise of our Ministry; He has placed us in the condition of wayfarers; and He has done all this for Himself: "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. xvi. 4). He, then, who regards God in His works, and who has recourse to Him in all matters, walks in the right way, and can say with truth: "My foot walked in the right way" (Eccl. li. 20). Rectitude (says St. Thomas) is in order to the end, and it is to the end that the intention refers. The Spouse in the Sacred Canticles is praised for this rectitude. Her eyes are said to be "dove's eyes" (Cant. iv. 1), because the dove ever keeps her gaze fixed on one object (says Theodoret). For this reason is she said to have

wounded the heart of her Spouse: "Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of thy eyes" (Cant. iv. 9)—that is to say, with the unity and simplicity of a right intention; for this is the eye which looks to eternity (says Albertus Magnus). Venerable Bede says that the intention is called "the eye" because it moves, rules, and bends, the mind, as the eye does the body. When the Priest looks to God alone, his works are full, and he then escapes the reproach which our Lord made to the Bishop of Sardis: "I find not thy works full before My God" (Apoc. iii. 2). Do them with a right intention, and they will be full; for the works of the hypocrite are empty (says Albertus Magnus). The most trifling actions of our ministry will have great value, if done with a right intention; for it is not the act itself, but the affection with which it is done, that is considered (says St. Augustine).

2. *Whither goest thou?* The best means of purifying the intention of every action is to question our conscience, and to say to ourselves, "Whither goest thou?"—to ask ourselves often every day, like St. Bernard, "For what purpose is this?" St. Thomas makes reflection that the first words which our Saviour addressed to those whom He designated for the Priesthood, were, "What seek you?" (St. John i. 38). By these words He would, if we may so say, examine them as to their intention, for that is the first thing which He looks for in His ministers, and which they ought to exact of themselves. Therefore let us frequently question ourselves on this point; for all our enemies contrive to assault us in the principle—that is, in the beginning of our works—in other words, in the *intention*—so that they may frustrate our most sacred acts, such as the celebration of Mass, administration of the Sacraments, and preaching: "Her adversaries are become her lords" (Lam. i. 5). Our own corruption conspires with them—that fulness of self-love which meets us even when we seek to escape it. The world conspires against us with its illusions, promising the praise of men as an abundant reward for our good works. Above all, the devil heads the conspiracy against us, endeavouring by his subtle suggestions to eliminate from our minds all consideration of God and of our eternal welfare, and causing that which appears right before men to become corrupt in

the sight of the Eternal Judge. Let us, therefore, not be deceived; let us examine ourselves most carefully, and strive most earnestly that all our actions may begin and end with a right intention, since on that depends their whole merit. Let us fortify our mind (as St. Chrysostom bids us) against our enemies, so as to render our works acceptable to God.

3. *Sorrow hath filled your heart.* St. Gregory says that the fatal effect of a perverse intention is to corrupt the very root of the tree, and to give all the fruit to the enemy. The whole body of our actions becomes darkened: "if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome" (St. Matt. vi. 23). How full of sadness and despondency does the heart become when a right intention is wanting! For it often happens that the man who devotes himself to worldly objects fails in attaining them, and finds himself disappointed and miserable even in this life. On the other hand, he who seeks God will find Him; and, whether he succeed or fail in his undertakings, he will remain in tranquillity, conscious in himself of having sought only to please Him Who is "the searcher of hearts and reins" (Ps. vii. 10). Moreover, he who has been destitute of a right intention will feel the greatest sadness at the hour of death, conscious of the futility of those labours which might otherwise have merited a crown of eternal glory. He will be of the number of those who utter this lamentation: "The crown is fallen from our head because we have sinned" (Lam. v. 16). May Almighty God deliver us from so great misfortune!

"To Thee, O Lord, Lord, are my eyes; in Thee have I put my trust, take not away my soul."—*Ps.* cxl. 8.

"I think of Thee, Lord, in goodness, and seek Thee in simplicity of heart."—From *Wisdom* i. 1.

MONDAY.

JESUS SPEAKS OF HIS PRIESTHOOD.

I. He goes to consummate it in heaven.
II. He still continues it upon earth.
III. In both respects His departure is for the benefit of His ministers.

"But I tell you the truth; it is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go I will send Him to you."—*St. John* xvi. 7.

1. *If I go not.* Jesus, as a true Shepherd, has preceded His sheep in the way to Heaven. "He goeth before them" (St. John x. 4). He has returned to His Father, as a Priest for ever, and "has entered into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 12). Fulfilling in Himself the figure of Aaron and of the other High Priests, He has entered even to the Right Hand of the Father, which is the Holy of Holies. He alone could express the ineffable name "Jehovah," because, as the Man-God, He alone is capable of giving infinite honour to His Father. There He holds the golden thurible; that is, He presents in our behalf His merits, and, through them, our prayers (Heb. ix.). He has carried the scars of the wounds wherewith He was sacrificed, to "the right hand of the Majesty on High" (Heb. i. 3); there He pleads our cause as a true "Advocate" in the Presence of God: "He appears now in the presence of God for us . . . He hath appeared by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 24, 26). His Priestly mediation is consummated in glory, perfected by the

offering of the Humanity which He assumed, and accompanied by true prayer, in which, as Man, He pleads for the application of His merits. This Priestly function is performed for us by Him, Who was made capable of suffering, and Who, "having been Himself tempted in all things, can have compassion on our infirmities." What tenderness, what confidence, what love, ought we not to have for Him! How grateful to Him ought we Priests to be, who know these truths so fully, who have experienced the fruits of them so abundantly, and who have been united to Him in such intimate bonds!

2. *If I go.* Jesus did not leave this earth to return no more: He has promised us to return: "I go away, and I come unto you" (St. John xiv. 28). He comes in very truth in "Transubstantiation," which is the Miracle of Miracles, and can be performed neither by man nor angel, but by Christ Himself. For He Who is the true Priest descends into our hands in the quality of Victim in the Sacrifice of the Altar, and, whilst we exercise this most august ministry as His visible agents, He Himself is, in an invisible matter, really working through our hands and rendering our action efficacious. He ever unites Himself with our flesh, He joins His most holy Body to ours, in order (says St. Chrysostom) to make us one with Himself. Moreover, He is the Ruler of the Church; and therefore, in token of the full "power given to Him in heaven and in earth," He showed to St. John that glorious inscription: "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Apoc. xix. 16). This kingdom,—foretold by the Prophets,—announced first by Himself and afterwards by the Apostles,—is a Priestly Kingdom, in which all things "will work together for good," to the elect, until He receives them in the heavenly mansion. If they are detained in Purgatory, it is He Who holds the keys thereof, and "when He shall open, none shall shut; when He shall shut, none shall open" (Isa. xxii. 22). Let us co-operate fervently with His Priesthood; let us "endure all manner of labour for the elect," in order that we may participate in the reward which He has merited for His zealous Ministers.

3. *It is expedient to you that I go.* In leaving the world, our Great High Priest had especially in view the sanctification of His

Ministers. Up to that moment the Apostles had been only simple disciples; but after the departure of Christ, Who sent down upon them the Holy Spirit, they became the teachers of the world. At first their virtue was, so to speak, in its infancy, when they rested on Him, as children on their father. But when the Holy Spirit placed them at the head of the flock, to form, lead, and extend it,—what prodigies of virtue did they not manifest? What should we Priests be, were Christ in the midst of us in a visible form? Who would depend on us and not on Him? Who would listen to us rather than to Him? Therefore He said: "It is expedient for you, it is necessary for you." Moreover, the Holy Ghost would not have come upon the Apostles if Christ had not first gone away; and for these reasons (says St. Thomas): viz., (1) because they were not sufficiently disposed for His reception; (2) because there was no necessity for such assistance, necessity being an indispensable condition of Divine aid; (3) because of Christ's dignity, Who, by sending the Holy Spirit, gave the strongest proof of His Divinity; and, lastly, in order to preserve the unity of the Church, which required that its invisible Head should be in Heaven, apart from the visible Head upon earth. Thus, by returning to His Father, Jesus intended to increase and perfect the sanctification of these first Priests, and of all their successors; He intended to render them more fit to receive the Holy Spirit, and to profit by His gifts. Let us ask, each one of himself: How have I used these advantages? Is the Great High Priest continually in my heart? Do I live by His Spirit? Do I desire to complete my pilgrimage, so that I may go to my Father, at whose Right Hand is seated the First-born of my brethren?

"What great things He hath done for my soul."—*Ps.* lxv. 16.

"Lord, whither goest thou? . . . Why cannot I follow Thee now?"—*St. John* xiii. 36, 37.

TUESDAY.

THE HOLY GHOST, BY MEANS OF THE CLERGY, CONVINCES THE WORLD OF THE SIN OF UNBELIEF.

I. UNBELIEF RIGHTLY CALLED A SIN.
II. THE HOLY GHOST, THROUGH THE APOSTLES, CONVINCED THE WORLD OF THIS SIN.
III. THE SAME CONVICTION STILL WROUGHT BY THE CLERGY.

"And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin . . . of sin, because they believed not in Me."—*St. John* xvi. 8, 9.

1. *Of sin, because they believed not in Me.* Our Saviour here speaks of unbelief under the name of "sin," as in another place He said: "If I had not come . . . they would not have sin" (St. John xv. 22). And justly so; for (as St. Thomas shews) unbelief is the greatest of all sins in its perversion of the whole moral being. It estranges man from God, taking from him not only the love but even the true knowledge of God. Moreover, it deprives the sinner of the necessary means for obtaining pardon of any sin whatever, by destroying his faith; and therefore St. Augustine says that, so long as this sin remains, all the rest are retained, but, when this departs, the rest are also put away. Hence, as, in the Day of Judgment, our Lord will reprove the damned solely for their want of mercy, because by mercy they would have received the pardon of their sins—so, in this place, He calls the mere want of faith sin, because faith would have been the means for obtaining the remission of all

sins. Lastly (as St. Augustine says), when the Faithful sin, they stray from God's path; but the unbeliever loses the path wholly. How miserable a condition! What zealous soul would not weep, as St. Teresa wept, at the thought of the darkness of those innumerable souls, who are without faith? That seraphic saint was accustomed to do severe penance to appease God's anger, and to obtain for unhappy infidels the light of truth.

2. *When He is come, He will convince the world of sin.* Such was the promise of Jesus—and there was no delay in its fulfilment. The Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost: the world saw Him not, because of its spiritual blindness; and therefore He spoke by the mouth of the Apostles, to whom Christ had said: "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (St. Matt. x. 20). He filled with Himself and with His gifts those rude, timid, weak, imperfect men; and they gave to the world innumerable proofs of wisdom, strength, power, and holiness; so that the men of this world should "have no excuse for their sin" (St. John xv. 22). Nevertheless, let us consider how greatly the Apostles laboured to co-operate with Him in thus convincing the world. From the very day of Pentecost, on which he began to preach, St. Peter continued through several years "with very many other words to testify and exhort them" (Acts ii. 40), and "every day" all the Apostles "ceased not, in the temple, and from house to house, to teach and preach Christ Jesus" (Acts v. 42). Let us meditate on some of the many things which St. Paul did, labouring to convince the world;—how he "taught publicly and from house to house" (Acts xx. 20);—how he "expounded, testifying and persuading them, from morning until evening" (Acts xxviii. 23). Thus the Holy Spirit, making use of these men whom He had raised to this high dignity, in a brief space of time changed the face of the whole world; so that after a few years St. Paul could write to the Romans: "Your faith is spoken of in the whole world" (Rom. i. 8).

3. *He will convince the world of sin.* The Apostles are no longer upon earth; but the world still continues as it was, and great will always be the number of unbelievers. Pagans, Heretics,

Jews, are still in our midst, and we may reckon generally (as St. Thomas says) these three kinds of unbelief. Now, who are they who should "enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death," but Priests, who are "the light of the world"? (St. Matt. v. 14). Christ left us here that we might be as luminaries (says St. Chrysostom); and if we were really luminaries—if we imitated the Apostles—how many should we not convert to the Faith! If we were all such as St. Paul, how many worlds might we not have drawn to us (continues the same Father)! But the most anxious efforts of zealous Bishops and Priests should be directed towards the conviction and conversion of unfaithful and rebellious children of the Catholic Church. These, being men of corrupt life, and therefore unwilling to see the light which disturbs them, have erred from the Faith, either by yielding to doubts which have risen up in their mind, or by reading wicked books and allowing themselves to be led away by heretical discourses. How many of these wandering sheep did not St. Eusebius, Bishop of Vercelli, convert in his Apostolic visitations of his diocese! How many did not St. John Chrysostom convert during the time of his exile, and St. Francis of Sales in his numerous missions! If only we were to succeed in converting one or two of the most influential or learned of the enemies of the Faith, we should find that Satan's own weapon would be turned against himself. For the tongue, which he had used as his instrument in destroying the souls of men, would then be employed most effectually in their conversion; and thus (as St. Augustine remarks) the head of Goliath would be cut off with his own sword. How many precious spoils might a Priest, through God's help, thus carry off; what merit for himself, and what benefit to the Church, might he thus procure.

"They that go far from Thee shall perish; Thou hast destroyed all them that are disloyal to Thee."—*Ps.* lxxii. 27.

"Come, O Spirit, and convince the world of sin."—*Ezechiel* xxxvii. 9; *St. John* xvi. 8.

WEDNESDAY.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, BY MEANS OF THE CLERGY, CONVINCES THE WORLD OF JUSTICE.

I. THE ERROR OF THE WORLD IN REGARD TO JUSTICE.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVINCED THE WORLD OF JUSTICE BY MEANS OF THE APOSTLES.

III. HE STILL CONTINUES THIS WORK BY MEANS OF THE CLERGY.

"He will convince the world . . . of justice . . . of justice, because I go to the Father, and you shall see Me no longer."—*St. John* xvi. 8—10.

1. *Of justice, because I go to the Father, and you shall see Me no longer.* It has been a common error amongst the heathen to believe that man might become just of himself and by his own strength; as it was the error of many of the Jews to suppose that he might be justified through the teaching of the Law. But the truth revealed by God is this—that no one can be justified without divine grace, which is given to us through Jesus Christ. Such is the teaching of the Church, as defined by the Council of Trent. Man's true justice must have its root in Faith, of which Jesus is the Author and Consummator. We are said to be "justified through Faith" (says the same Council) "because Faith is the beginning of man's salvation, and the foundation and root of all justification." Therefore Jesus Christ Himself declared that the Holy Spirit would convince the world of justice, because He Himself would return to His Father and be no longer seen on earth; and thus room would be made for

Faith, which belongs to things not seen. This is justice (says St. Augustine) because Thou goest to the Father, and they shall no longer see Thee; for justice is of Faith. For the "just liveth by faith," and he then liveth by faith when he seeth not that which he believeth. But in our days it is the common error of heretics to call a man just, moral, honest, and good, simply because he does no harm to any one; although he be entirely without Faith, and neglect to perform any of the religious acts which Faith prescribes. Hence, they would do away, as far as possible, even with the very terms of the Gospel—speaking of "benevolence" in place of charity, and of God as the "Supreme Being," &c.—as if those terms, which have been ever adopted by pious Christians, were not originated by the Divine Wisdom. Nay more, they scoff at those who are faithful to the language and religious practices of their forefathers, and call them by contemptuous names: "They are resolute in wicked words" (Ps. lxiii. 6). Alas! unhappy world, that knowest not Jesus Christ! "The world knew Him not" (St. John i. 10.)

2. *He will convince the world of justice.* The Holy Spirit, by means of the Apostles, convinced the world of the justice of our Lord Jesus Christ, by shewing that He was not a sinner, a malefactor, a seducer (as His enemies had called Him), but that He was the Immaculate, Only-begotten Son of the Father,—the Holy of Holies, Who through His own justice returned to His Father. To go to the Father (explains St. Chrysostom) will be a proof of an irreproachable life, so that it cannot be said: This man is a sinner, and not from God. The Holy Spirit also convinced the world that justice belongs only to those who are the true members of Christ. His followers, indeed, presented to the world a glorious spectacle in the infant Church, resplendent as it was with sanctity. All persevered in the Apostles' doctrine, in the holy Eucharist, in prayer, in detachment from earthly things, in mutual concord (Acts ii. 42; iv. 32). All this was publicly known, and was commended by the people generally: "They took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people" (Acts ii. 46, 47). Accordingly, St. Paul, in describing the cor-

ruptions of idolatry, refers by way of contrast to the sanctification of those who were converted to Christianity: "Such were some of you; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11). The first Christians were seen to be "filled with the fruit of justice, through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. i. 11). The Apostles therefore fulfilled their mission; they convinced the world of justice, and peopled the earth with the just. How great is their glory now in Heaven! Let us implore their aid, that we may also fulfil our mission.

3. *He will convince the world of justice.* It concerns the successors of the Apostles, it concerns all who are associated in their labours, to convince the world of justice. Therefore let us demonstrate to the world by Holy Scripture, and by the Tradition of the Fathers, the truth of all that the holy Council of Trent has defined in regard to justification. Let us say to the unbeliever: Thou art not just, because thou dost not live by Faith, whereas "the just man liveth by faith" (Rom. i. 17). Let us say to those who refuse to confess their sins: "Blessed only are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb" (Apoc. xxii. 14). Let us say to those who do not communicate: Your soul is dead; for Christ has said: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you" (St. John vi. 54). Without these means of salvation, how can they resist the concupiscence of the flesh, the scandals of the world, the suggestions of the devil? How can they merit the name of just or virtuous men? Alas! we shall see at the last day that many whom the world called "just" had a seared conscience, which, like the great linen sheet seen by St. Peter, covered innumerable unclean creatures (Acts x. 11). We shall see that behind the wall of hypocrisy were all the abominations represented in the vision of Ezechiel (Ezech. viii. 8). Let us display in ourselves, and in the Faithful whom we direct, the image of true justice: "that we might give ourselves a pattern unto you to imitate us" (2 Thess. iii. 9). And thus (as St. Augustine says), by God's help they will no longer offer to the world the Babylonish love of an earthly

country, nor will they exhibit mere political virtue, as those who regard human glory alone. Strengthen me, O God, in this undertaking, and grant that I may confirm by my life what I shall declare by my words.

"O God, forsake me not, until I shew forth . . . Thy justice."—*Ps.* lxx. 18, 19.

"That we may serve Him . . . in holiness and justice before Him, all our days."—*St. Luke* i. 74, 75.

THURSDAY.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, BY MEANS OF THE CLERGY, CONVINCES THE WORLD OF JUDGMENT.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS JUDGMENT.

II. HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVINCED THE WORLD OF JUDGMENT.

III. HOW HE STILL CONTINUES TO FULFIL THIS OFFICE.

"He will convince the world of . . . judgment . . . of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged."—*St. John* xvi. 8, 11.

1. *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged.* Jesus Christ, on a former occasion, associated the judgment (that is, the condemnation) of the devil with the condemnation of the world: "Now is the judgment of the world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (St. John xii. 31). The judgment of the world, and of its prince—that is, the condemnation of the devil and of those who are his children and members—consists (says St. Chrysostom) in manifesting the injustice of the sufferings inflicted on Christ by the men of this world at the suggestions of the devil. It consists also in the

reprobation of those wicked maxims of the devil which are spread abroad in the world and are followed by the children of the devil. It consists in the condemnation of those who complain of the devil as if he were an all-powerful enemy whom they could not resist, and who thus excuse themselves for their unbelief or for those acts which are contrary to the faith they profess. Now, by Christ's death the devil was chained, and the world convinced of his condemnation; for (says St. Augustine) the prince of this world is irrevocably doomed to the judgment of eternal fire, and therefore is the world convinced of this judgment also, seeing it is judged together with its prince, whom it imitates in his pride and ungodliness. Let us meditate on this triumph of our Lord; let us fight courageously under His banner, which is the Cross. To fight as captains of the army under this triumphant banner is the glory of the Priesthood.

2. *He will convince the world of judgment.* The Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles, and through them convinced the world, as He had promised. For they separated themselves from the world, refused to serve the world, preached against the world, snatched away from the world innumerable followers and laboured to make them persevere in goodness. The sermons of the Apostles were full of the condemnation of the world, and were all directed to the object pointed out by the Apostle—viz., "that we be not condemned with the world" (1 Cor. xi. 32). They had heard from the Saviour's lips that the world would hate them, would persecute them, would kill them; they suffered all, they overcame all, trusting in Him who said to them: "Have confidence: I have overcome the world" (St. John xvi. 33). Nay, they taught, not men only, but even women and children, to overcome by martyrdom both the world and the devil. They manifested in an especial manner the condemnation of the devil, when, by means of the Holy Spirit, they drove him from the hearts of the newly-converted Christians. In this manner was God's promise fulfilled: "I will take away the unclean spirit out of the earth" (Zach. xiii. 2). And justly could the Apostle say: "We have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12). Let us rejoice with the Apostles for

the use they have made of the gifts and graces received from the Holy Spirit, and let us pray to them to obtain for us the Apostolical spirit, which we so greatly need.

3. *He will convince the world of judgment.* The Holy Spirit has come to us many times, but He came to us in an especial manner when we received the sacrament of Holy Order, that we might carry on this same work of convincing the world,—that is, of proclaiming the fact that the world has been condemned in its Prince. After eighteen centuries this condemnation has become so notorious, that no one in these days can be ignorant of it, or plead excuse for following such a deadly enemy. Hence we are not exposed to such dangers and difficulties as those to which the Apostles were subjected. It remains for us to exhort the Faithful to avoid the judgment which our Lord will pronounce, so that they may not, as disciples of the "prince of this world," share in the condemnation of the devil. We must preach against the maxims of the world, shewing them to be false, perverse, ridiculous, deceitful, pernicious; for "hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor. i. 20). Let us live, and let us persuade others to live, according to the maxims of the Church,—just as Noe, by the Ark (which was a figure of the Church) saved his family, and condemned the world: "He framed the ark for the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world" (Heb. xi. 7). Let us detach ourselves from the goods of this world, let us live separated from them as far as we can; let us imitate the Apostle, who, because of this detachment and separation, promised his followers that they, together with himself, should one day judge the world and even the spirits of evil: "Know you not that the saints shall judge this world . . . . know you not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3).

"Thou hast caused judgment to be heard from heaven, the earth trembled and was still, when God arose to judgment."—*Ps.* lxxv. 9, 10.

"Just Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me."—*St. John* xvii. 25.

FRIDAY.

OF PRUDENCE IN DIRECTING CONSCIENCES.

I. DOCTRINE TO BE ADAPTED TO THE CAPACITY OF THE HEARERS.

II. COUNSELS TO BE IN PROPORTION TO THE STRENGTH OF THE PENITENT.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE INVOKED.

". "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot hear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak; and the things that are to come He shall shew you. He shall glorify Me, because He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it to you."—*St. John* xvi. 12, 13.

1. *I have many things to say to you.* Jesus adapted His instructions to the capacity of His Apostles, just as the Holy Spirit in the present day teaches the Faithful those spiritual truths which they are capable of receiving. For there are truly many points of good doctrine (as St. Augustine says) which man's limited understanding cannot bear. Therefore, if we would follow the Spirit of Christ, we must use a certain economy in instructing, exhorting, admonishing, or reproving, those whose consciences we direct; for otherwise, even though our discourse may contain great truths, we shall only weary our hearers to no purpose. As St. Augustine says, it is an easier matter to make our discourse distasteful than to bring home its truth to our hearers. The Confessor is the Judge, Physician, Master, of his penitents; and prudence, being as

it is) the chief requisite for exercising these offices well, will be often best shown in silence with regard to certain truths which the Penitents may be incapable of understanding. Jesus would have us both faithful and wise servants, in order to dispense the food of doctrine to His family in due season: "Who thinkest thou is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath appointed over his family, to give them meat in season?" (St. Matt. xxiv. 45). Therefore (as St. Chrysostom points out) Jesus Christ requires two things from His Ministers,—that is to say, both fidelity and also prudence. Some must be fed (as the Corinthians were fed by the Apostle) "with milk and not with meat" (1 Cor. iii. 2). Some must be rescued from falling by salutary admonitions, or, if they have already fallen, must be assisted to rise again at once, as St. Peter was raised up by our Lord immediately after his fall (St. Matt. xxvi. 34). Others we must encourage to confess their sins by shewing them, as our Lord shewed the Samaritan woman, that we already know them (St. John iv. 29). In the case of some, we must not disregard their dignity in reproving them—after the example of Nathan when he corrected David (2 Kings xii. 1). Others must be treated with reproaches, as Eliseus reproached Giezi (4 Kings v. 25). Here is a wide field in which a Confessor may find matter for self-examination. Let him consider what harm he may have done, by imprudence in his method of correction! Happy is he who seriously lays to heart any such errors of which he may have been guilty.

2. *You cannot hear them now.* The Confessor's prudence must be practical; that is to say, he must prescribe the special remedies suitable to each individual case, whether it be a matter of conversion from sin, or perseverance, or reparation of injuries, or satisfaction. For this end he must not only weigh carefully the general principles of Morals, but also each subject in particular, with all the circumstances attending it, as St. Thomas teaches. If Confessors did but place themselves in the position of those with whom they have to deal,—if they did but regard the special circumstances of each individual case,—there would not be so many among them who "bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders, but with a finger of their own

they will not move them" (St. Matt. xxiii. 4). For in these words our Lord reproves those Directors who lay such heavy burdens on their penitents, that they either reject the load altogether, or, after having borne it for a short time, throw it off in anger and vexation, and abandon themselves to every disorder. Far better is it for the Confessor to be severe to himself and gentle with others. Let us examine ourselves on this head, and also in regard to that other rule of prudence given us by our Divine Master: "Neither do they put new wine into old bottles: otherwise the bottles break and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish" (St. Matt. ix. 17). For by this similitude He taught the Apostles not to impose on recent converts a rule of life unsuited to their tender condition, and admonished them to be moderate in prescribing exercises of piety to their future disciples. Who can tell how many souls may have escaped from our hands, because we have not followed this salutary rule? Have mercy, O God, on them and on us!

3. *The Spirit of truth will teach you.* He who has the Spirit of truth, and invokes Him for the guidance of souls to Heaven, may expect His assistance and His light: "Thou shalt cry, and he shall say: Here I am" (Isa. lviii. 9). That same Spirit, in an open, visible, and extraordinary manner (adapted to the exigencies of the time), instructed the Apostles in all truths connected with Faith and Religion and with man's salvation, perfection, and eternal happiness. So now, though in an invisible manner, and by secret inspirations, He will still instruct the director of Souls, to whom He says: "Incline thy ear to my prudence." He is the Author of all virtues, and therefore of prudence in particular. Prudence is given to us (says St. Augustine) through the grace of God. Thus, at one time the Holy Spirit suggests to thee some suitable reflection—at another time causes thee to find the counsel thou needest in the pages of a book—at another time He leads thee to consult one more learned or more experienced than thyself. In each case He will enable thee to see whether that which is proposed be lawful, fitting, and expedient; for these are the three tests which we should apply to all such matters, as prescribed by St. Bernard. Implore then the aid of the Holy Spirit, and pray to Him, with St. Gregory, to make thy breast as an Ark,

in which shall be laid up the rod of vigour and the manna of sweetness.

"Let my mouth speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart understanding."—From *Ps.* xlviii. 4.

"Incline my heart to know prudence."—From *Prov.* ii. 2.

SATURDAY.

THE DUTY OF PRIESTS IN REGARD TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN UNDER THE TITLE OF "HELP OF CHRISTIANS."

I. THEY SHOULD AVAIL THEMSELVES OF HER HELP.

II. THEY SHOULD INVITE THE FAITHFUL TO ENJOY THE SAME.

III. THEY SHOULD CO-OPERATE WITH HER IN HELPING THEM.

"Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck. But he said: Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it."—*St. Luke* xi. 27, 28.

1. *Blessed is the womb that bore Thee.* St. Andrew of Crete calls the womb of the Blessed Virgin the womb of the divine Incarnation, and St. Germanus calls Her bowels, in which the Divine Word took flesh and dwelt for nine months, the bowels of God. What wonder, then, if they resemble "the bowels of the mercy of our God"? What wonder if She, more truly than even the Apostle, can say, "How I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ"? (Phil. i. 8). Now Jesus Christ assured us that "out of the belly" of the Faithful "shall flow rivers of living water" (St. John vii. 38), and this water (says St. Augustine)

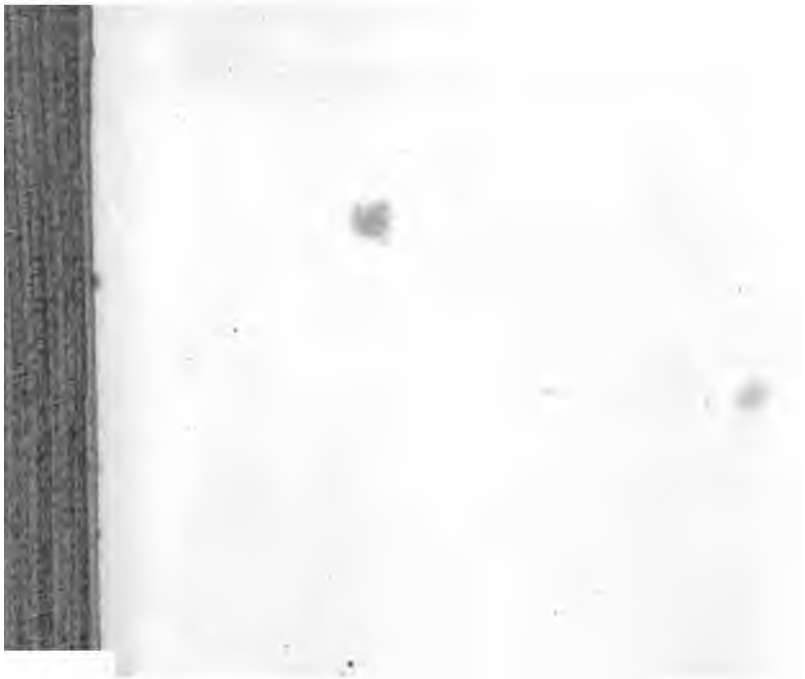
signifies the Holy Spirit—His grace, His charity. Let Priests then hasten to Mary, and drink of this water; let them be the first to drink of it, and then let them give it to their spiritual children. "He drank thereof himself, and his children" (St. John iv. 12). Let them be the first to taste the sweet fruits of Her patronage, and to profit by Her maternal invitation: "Be filled with my fruits" (Eccles. xxiv. 26). How miserable it is for a Priest to procure this help for others, and not to enjoy it himself. To him might the words be applied: "Thou shalt see it with thy eyes, but shalt not eat thereof" (4 Kings vii. 2). O Mary, let it not be thus in my case! be Thou always our help in our necessities!

2. *And the paps that gave Thee suck.* What are we to understand by the paps of the Blessed Virgin but her sweetness? says St. Rupertus. The heavenly Spouse praises them in these words: "Thy two breasts like two young roes" (Cant. iv. 5); and they signify (says Richard of St. Victor) Her charity, with which She gives the milk of pardon to sinners and the milk of grace to the just. To Her breasts ought we Priests to invite all the children of this tender Mother, "that they may suck and be filled with the breasts of her consolations" (Isa. lxvi. 11). Be they just, or be they sinners, let them have recourse to Mary; She will be the Help of both. Let them chase away from their mind all timidity in approaching Her and imploring Her help; for there is nothing austere in Her, nothing to affright them. She (says St. Bernard) does not examine the merits of those who invoke Her: She is most merciful to all, and hastens to aid us in all our necessities. She opens the bosom of Her mercy to all (continues St. Bernard), giving redemption to the captive, health to the sick, consolation to the sorrowful, pardon to sinners, grace to the just.

3. If Mary's *paps are blessed*, blessed also, according to the measure of their labours, are those Priests who, after the example of this great Mother, endeavour to deserve well of Christians. The Spouse of the Sacred Canticle, in admiring the ornaments of the Bride, says to her: "How beautiful are thy breasts, my sister, my spouse, thy breasts are more beautiful than wine" (Cant. iv. 10); and St. Gregory of Nyssa and Venerable Bede say that

in this passage He intends to praise as His Sister and Spouse—that is, as worthy of His love and friendship—the Priestly soul that suckles and nourishes the ignorant, the weak, the imperfect. Moreover, St. Gregory the Great teaches that Preachers are called in the Sacred Canticles "eyes" of the Church, because they see the needs of the Faithful—"teeth," because they correct the guilty, and with the "tooth" of reproof introduce wanderers into the body of the Church—the "neck," because they furnish the Spirit of Grace to the Body—and "breasts," because they give milk to little ones in Christ. Therefore let us exercise ourselves with alacrity in this ministry, and in all the other works of mercy, so as to give help to Christians, and to imitate the great Mother of Mercy. So shall we gain the blessing of God, and of men: "He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed" (Prov. xxii. 9). The more generous we shew ourselves in dispensing nourishment, help, and favour, the more will the glory of our Ministry increase; and even the enemies of the Priesthood will be unable to deny the testimony of facts: "The lips of many shall bless him that is liberal of his bread, and the testimony of his truth is faithful" (Eccl. xxxi. 28). O most clement Virgin, Help of Christians, succour my misery, obtain for me the grace to imitate Thee, and do Thou bless my works of mercy!

"O grant us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man."—*Ps.* cvii. 13.

"To Thee do we cry, O holy Mother of God, and by Thee does the help of the Lord come to us."—*Divine Office.*

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